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Photograph of Gauguin, 1888  
(from *Mme. Anne Joly-Segalen*)

# Paul Gauguin

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*LETTERS TO HIS WIFE AND FRIENDS*

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EDITED BY MAURICE MALINGUE

TRANSLATED BY HENRY J. STENNING

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*“ What have I done  
to be so unhappy ? ”*

PAUL GAUGUIN



## PREFACE

ON THE 8TH MAY, 1903, at Atuana, a village of Dominique, an islet of the Marquesas group, Paul Gauguin lay, inert, prostrated by two successive swoons, no longer conscious of morning or evening, day or night. Towards eleven o'clock on that morning, Pastor Vernier, summoned hastily, entered the native hut in which the painter lived and found him lifeless, one leg hanging out of bed, but still warm. And then Tioka, the faithful old Marquisan, who accompanied the pastor, threw himself on the body of his white friend, crying in despair : "Gauguin is dead, we are lost."

\* \* \*

For some little time, Paul Gauguin had realised that his diseased heart could not beat much longer. Had he not written to Danyel de Monfreid : "I suffer with my heart : My heart is attacked." He well knew its weakness, resulting from the poverty in which he had been struggling for fifteen years, the privations he had endured, and the troubles which had overwhelmed him. He had not been treated for the syphilis with which he was affected, the sequence of a deplorable night of love before his departure for Tahiti, and it had poisoned his system; but how could he have paid for a doctor and procured remedies when he lacked the money to buy food? Incapable of standing up, he could see his swollen legs covered with enormous red, angry eczema sores, which tormented him horribly.

Not a word of complaint escaped him. To keep silent, he summoned the pride of his ancestors—the remote Borgias of Aragon—from whom he claimed descent. But as the new century dawned, although he exerted enormous will-power, and while he had begged for only two years of health to reach a certain maturity in his art, he knew he was finished.

Had his life then ended only in failure? "I am a great artist, and I know it," he would say to his wife, and in order to give unfettered expression to his pictorial vision—as a free man—he had

had the prodigious courage to renounce all that life holds dear: a position on the Bourse, wife, love, children, home. He had raised up a barrier of indifference between the world and himself as regards everything not appertaining to his art—which is not to say that he was incapable of emotion. But nobody, except Daniel de Monfreid, had ever understood his confidence in his genius, his pride, his apparent scepticism, his self-styled egoism. What was it to him that his own life appeared to the world as a failure, and that he was finishing it in suffering and misfortune? He knew the value of his example, the importance of his message and, putting painting first, he regretted nothing. Following his star, he had never abandoned the struggle, despite his mental and physical torments, his distresses, his ghastly solitude. "What bothers me the most," he confessed, "is not so much poverty as the continual obstacles to my art, which I cannot practise as I feel it, and as I could were it not for the poverty which ties my hands."

And now, he was beaten by this poverty and illness. Although it was the opinion of Pastor Vernier and the writer, Victor Segalen, who was present in Papeete at the sale of the painter's effects, and later visited Atuana, as well as of the doctors who studied the symptoms of his disease, that Paul Gauguin died of a heart attack, I say, for my part, that he died of starvation and despair.

\* \* \*

Paul Gauguin died of starvation and despair. Such is the tragedy which emerges from this correspondence which we have collected, without unfortunately, being able to include the letters addressed by the artist to Daniel de Monfreid, and published by Victor Segalen, who used initials instead of the names of persons mentioned.

To-day, with the exception of Judith Gérard, Paul-Emile Colin and Léon Fauché, the last survivor of the 1889 Exhibition of the Impressionist and Synthetic Group of Painters, both friends and enemies of Gauguin have in their turn disappeared, and although the living may claim consideration we owe nothing but truth to the dead. I have, therefore, omitted no word and no name from these letters—save that of a young Dane, Miss de M . . . —nor any accusation made by the painter against those he held responsible for the conditions in which he lived in Tahiti.

The first letters, those of Mme. Heegaard, the mother of a friend of his wife, reveal a genial Gauguin, delighted with the married state and at having carried away from Denmark a pearl as precious as Mette Sophie Gad. In all these letters he gives the impression of being enamoured of this healthy, strong, open-minded, tall and handsome girl of twenty-four, as well as physically aroused by the contours of her firm, well modelled body. Affectionate husband, loving father, tenderly describing his first baby: "White as a swan, strong as Hercules," Gauguin glided through the happiest days of his life.

But the happiness of extraordinary persons never lasts long. The employee of Bertin's Bank became the impressionist painter, Paul Gauguin, whose pictures found no buyers. In December, 1884—two years after this metamorphosis—Mette had decided to return to Denmark, and Gauguin was selling tilt for a living. He sent regular reports to Messrs. Dillies & Co. of Roubaix, his employers, on the course of business, which was, of course, not good; exerting himself although detached from everything alien to his art, not to omit the slightest detail likely to assist the firm, in coping with competition.

With the doggedness which characterised him, he was to be, for several months the remarkable agent for tilt that was unsaleable because of its high price; persevering with customers, amenable towards his employers, until wearied at length with percentages, measurements and invoices, he was to abandon family, tilt and Denmark.

In August, 1885, there begin the letters to "My dear Mette," which were to continue until 1897 and certainly constitute the most extraordinary records of love, suffering and bitterness towards the only woman whom Gauguin really loved and respected, and also the most overwhelming indictments in the trial of Mette Gauguin, who can now be charged with incomprehension of the artist, indifference towards the man, and with having as a wife failed the father of her five children.

Let me explain. We may concede that, of middle-class family and education, attracted by Parisian life and Gauguin's business position—had he not fourteen pairs of trousers—Mette, in contrast with wives of innumerable artists, found it difficult to contemplate poverty for herself and her children. But it is certain that, once definitely separated from her husband she contrived a modest but



his art. And nothing could avail to deflect him from his painting.

He jokes about the illegitimate children he scatters about the world; a daughter in Paris, a boy Emil and more daughters in Tahiti and in La Dominique, but his legitimate children, "flesh of our flesh," as he reminds Mette so seasonably, are never out of his thoughts. He would have liked to direct their education, form their minds, feel they were French; instead of this, his wife tore them from him, and made them Danes in heart and soul. He found it particularly painful to believe, according to certain allusions from Mette, that his children might one day blush for the name they bore. This idea obsessed him for a long time.

He was devoted to little Clovis and his daughter Aline, with her innocent expression, in whom he saw reflected his own sensitiveness, and who understood him better than Emil, Jean and Pola. For this sweet, submissive child, who alone realised that her father, despite his poverty, was a great painter, he compiled, in 1893, a notebook which he dedicated to her between a bad reproduction of Corot and an eulogistic chronicle of Jean Dolent:

This Notebook is dedicated to my daughter Aline.

- Scattered incoherent notes like dreams, like Life—all made up of scraps. •

These two children, of delicate health, were doomed to die young, Aline in 1897, at 18, and Clovis in 1900, at 21 years of age.

Other letters are addressed to "Dear Schuff," once in the service of Bertin, where he made Gauguin's acquaintance. He, too, forsook the Bank for painting. Emile Schuffenecker took a studio first in the Rue Boulard, afterwards in the Rue Durand-Clary, and spent several hours every day entertaining his friends. They were always certain to find a bed there and something to eat. Married to a charming and pretty woman, who in those early days was not disturbed by a lively household, the "worthy Schuff" opened wide his doors and, amid the smoke of cigarettes, long discussions on art, destined to revolutionize painting, took place every evening and were often prolonged far into the night.

This friend, through good and ill report, welcomed Gauguin, whenever the painter, not knowing where else to turn, found his way to the house. He never refused a request for money.

Although he was not enamoured of Gauguin's Breton works, Schuffenecker remained an impressionist all his life. He admired his friend and recognised his genius and on his account deliberately

sacrificed his peace of mind. But the visits of geniuses are rarely a source of quiet, which Schuffenecker was not long in finding out, especially between 1888 and 1891, when Gauguin often showed the basest ingratitude. Nevertheless, nothing ever wore out his patience or his friendship.

With Emile Bernard it was somewhat different. This young man of twenty, well-informed, zealous, mystic, with a remarkable talent for painting, whom Schuffenecker met on a road in Brittany, looked up to Gauguin much as Rimbaud looked up to Verlaine. And tragedy, albeit of a different kind, was in store for both painter and poet.

Gauguin's meeting with Bernard, in August, 1888, in the sitting room of the pension Gloanec, at Pont-Aven, was the collision which precipitated the synthesis, which Gauguin would sometimes ironically write "Saintaise because it rhymed with foutaise"<sup>1</sup> but the importance of which was at once realised by Gauguin with his extremely acute perceptions. Between the four walls of a little room in the pension Gloanec, Bernard rapidly painted for his new friend, from memory, so as to cut out the useless complication of forms and tones, a magnificent canvas, *Breton women in a meadow*, representing Breton women in black dresses, seated in a green and yellow meadow; and Gauguin, enchanted by this method, which consisted in reducing all forms to their essential lines and the colours to all the tones of the palette—a method which he tried to imitate without being perfectly successful—painted in his turn for Bernard the *Vision after the Sermon*, upon a red instead of a yellow green background, and in which he avoided shadows as well as the modelling in the heads.

But Bernard was only twenty, while Gauguin was over forty. The former lived in a perpetual gushing of art forms, designs, water-colours, oils, stained-glass windows, frescos—preoccupied entirely with lines and new creations; the latter, while admitting his poverty, sought to escape from it, and accepted everything that his connexions could do in order to evade it. He was thus naturally not disposed to deny the paternity of pictorial symbolism which Albert Aurier attributed exclusively to him on seeing the *Vision after the Sermon*, a paternity which exasperated Bernard to such an

<sup>1</sup> "Foutaise" and "Saintaise" impossible to translate. Personal invention of the poet.

extent that his personal and artistic life was thereby profoundly disturbed.

In his letters to Bernard, in which he never deviated from his position of the elder, Gauguin freely discusses the efforts he made to attain to his mastery, often gives him very valuable advice, and encourages him to persevere in his endeavours, in spite of the hostility of his family, who neither admitted nor understood his vocation. It is true that the famous elder had another reason for being benevolent: he wanted and at the same time respected his friend's sister, Madeleine Bernard, a young girl of exquisite sensibility and noble character, whom he even meditated abducting so violent was his desire.

Letter after letter reveals the solitary life of Paul Gauguin, with his hopes and disappointments, the life that he dreamed of as peaceful and industrious in the South Sea Islands, the isles of Paradise, where all is beauty, kindness and light—and that made him so wretched.

The actual facts can be stated in a few words. Gauguin wanted 2,400 francs a year upon which to live in Tahiti. He has himself stated that, when he succumbed to the spell of the South Seas in 1895 and set off for the second time, he had obtained the promise of certain picture dealers to guarantee him regular sales, not one of which was ever kept. While awaiting the first remittances, he reckoned to live for two years on loans to be granted by the proprietor of the *Café des Variétés*, 2,600 francs: the painter Maufra 300 francs: Dosbourg a frame-maker, 600 francs: Talbourn, 800 francs, of which he had received no more than 600 francs by 1897.

The budget which he had carefully prepared was completely disorganised, and, from April, 1896, his letters to Monfreid are again full of his financial worries: "The longer I go on, the deeper I sink," he rightly said; but he was sinking because the majority of the amateurs and dealers with whom he was in touch, either directly or through the agency of Daniel de Monfreid, scented the artist's financial value, and made every effort to obtain his canvases as cheaply as possible in order to do a good stroke of business.

The dealer Vollard<sup>1</sup> was one of those chiefly responsible for Gauguin's poverty. He obtained for 2,000 francs a fine picture

<sup>1</sup> Vollard never comes but when he already has a buyer and 25% commission is not enough for him; he cares not a damn for anything but success. Gauguin, 22nd February, 1899.

which he had already sold to an amateur for 10,000 francs, and bought for 150 or 200 francs pictures which he disposed of for 1,000 francs, whilst remitting money very irregularly to the painter. By 1900, Ambrose Vollard had stocked away in the famous cellar below his shop in Rue Lafitte, a number of Gauguin's pictures, which he kept in the expectation of making large profits.

These facts, which demonstrate clearly the exploitation of the artist, would not have to be recorded, had Théo van Gogh lived. It may be said that with the death of Théo van Gogh, whom Vincent had interested in his welfare, Gauguin saw his sole chance of success vanish, for Théo would soon have found customers for his painter, without seeking to defraud him.

\* \* \*

With impaired digestion, excessively impressionable, exhausted by sleepless nights, sometimes remaining in a crouched position for twenty hours out of the twenty four, literally "killed," as he himself described it, Paul Gauguin, "the savage," "the barbarian," from time to time recovered sufficient lucidity and strength to seize his brushes and express his vision of primitive beauty and humanity by depicting a race in which he divined the origins of the world. •

These works composed with surprising virtuosity, in which the design aims at expressing the form, in which the alternate use of powerful scales of warm and cold tones, blue, red, orange, yellow, violet, impart to the subjects reproduced an arresting significance: that of death and life—these works abounding in simplification, brutality and reflection restored the monumental quality to painting. And Gauguin's art was the parent of modern art.

Brittany, Martinique, the South Sea islands—these magical lands—could not appease the sufferings of Paul Gauguin, the solitary. But these letters, published now<sup>1</sup> for the first time, restore him to us to-day, stripped of legend, a veritable God of painting, taking his rightful place among the Immortals.

Maurice Malingue.

<sup>1</sup> Published by Bernard Grasset, Paris, in 1946.





Bust of Mette Gauguin by Paul Gauguin  
(*permission of Home House Trustees*)



## FOREWORD

As it is impossible to publish at present the general correspondence of Paul Gauguin—the letters to Daniel de Monfreid edited by Victor Segalen in 1918 being excluded from the present collection for private reasons—I have tried to collect all I could of the letters addressed by the painter to his wife and his friends.

Consequently, my enquiries have led me to the few survivors of those who knew Paul Gauguin, either in 1888, or during his last sojourn in France, from 1893 to 1895.

I have met Marie le Pape, the pretty servant maid at the Gloanec pension, who saw nothing in Gauguin but an artist who wished to paint her nude, Madame Judith Gérard, daughter-in-law of the musician Molard, whose ardent youth captivated Gauguin, Léon Fauché, “the man of Nancy” of the Volpini exhibition, at whose residence Gauguin etched the famous portrait of Stéphane Mallarmé.

I was cordially welcomed by everyone, who, in memory of Gauguin, did their best to recall this remote epoch of their existence, or placed at my disposal letters which they still possessed.

A large numbers of letters have also been communicated to me by the families of their addressees or their successors, as well as by collectors of autographs. But this correspondence reveals gaps which it is impossible at the moment for me to fill. Many letters have been destroyed by Gauguin’s friends, others are scattered either in France or abroad, where I have been unable to trace them. In any event, *Gauguin’s Letters to his Wife and his Friends*, comprise, independently of those received by Daniel de Monfried, a correspondence the study of which is essential for an understanding of the man and the painter.

I am indebted to Mme. Jeanne Schuffenecker, daughter of Emile Schuffenecker, for sending me some letters addressed to her father and to Messrs. Dillies & Co., of Roubaix, Gauguin’s employers.



Thanks to these documents, I have been able to clear up many obscure points in the relations between Gauguin and his wife. Emile Bernard's widow has authorised me to publish the important records collected by Emile Bernard in his studio on the Quai de Bourbon. I am indebted to M. Alfred Dupont for the letters addressed to Arsène Alexandre, Charles Morice and the Colonial officials. To Dominique Denis for those to his father Maurice Denis. The letters to Stéphane Mallarmé were discovered at Valvins, by Professor Henry Mondor, of the Académie Française. Thanks to the famous bookseller, Marcel Lecomte, I became acquainted with letters and postcards addressed to Madame Rachilde. Marcel Guérin communicated to me the letters to Félix Bracquemond. The Gouzer family those to their relative Dr. Gouzer. M. J. Williame, notary of Châtauroux, acquainted me with the letters addressed to his uncle, the art critic Albert Aurier and the Library of Art and History of the University of Paris allowed me to inspect the important correspondence of the painter with his wife.

In addition to the persons above mentioned, I am also indebted for valuable information to André Fontainas, François Cadoret Mayor of Riec-sur-Belon, Robert Le Gloanec, the painter Emile Compard, the engraver Paul Emile Colin, Clement Altarriba Michel Ange Bernard, Jean Loize and the comte de la Roche-foucauld, as well as the widow of Maurice Denis.

Marcel Guiot has kindly lent me photographs of unpublished works of Gauguin.

I have added a few notes designed to elucidate events already so remote, to which the painter alludes.

On the other hand, I have not corrected grammatical errors which Gauguin sometimes makes, while refraining from adding thereto the famous intolerable *sic*<sup>1</sup>.

Moreover, these mistakes are the rare signs of fatigue which escape Gauguin. Whatever the incidents which marked his life lowered his health or depressed his spirits, the painter's writing is never straggling. On the contrary, it seems that the more Gauguin decayed physically, the steadier became his hand in writing. Thu

<sup>1</sup> No attempt has been made to reproduce these errors, whether of grammar or punctuation, in this translation.

at Copenhagen, as at Pont-Aven, Martinique, Tahiti and Dominique, the artist's caligraphy is slightly sloping, always regular and distinguished.

Now and then he decorated his letters with a sketch, while as to paper, his slender resources would not allow him to be exacting. He bought packets of white sheets or lined paper from tobacconists or stationers, of a poor quality which has not worn well.

M. M.



## PAUL GAUGUIN: LETTERS

### 1.

TO MRS. HEEGAARD<sup>1</sup>.

Paris, 9 February, 1873.

Dear Madam,

The kind letter you have been good enough to send me congratulating me on the choice I have made in asking for Mette's hand, tells me that you also love her. Good friends are rare and I am happy to bestow this title on you, to which I attach much importance.

I am sure that Miss Mette<sup>2</sup> will find many admirers in France, the strength of her character combined with her loyal feelings attracting everybody's esteem, so I count myself very happy at her choice.

Rest assured that in carrying off from Denmark so precious a pearl, I will do everything possible, and even impossible, so that she will not regret leaving all her friends, whom she will love, in spite of that, as in the past. I look forward to greeting you on your arrival in Paris, and in the meantime, remain with all good wishes,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

Give my affectionate greetings to Miss Louise<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Early in the year 1873, Mr. Heegaard, a Copenhagen manufacturer, invited Mette Sophie Gad, his daughter Marie's best friend, to visit France with her. It was during this trip that Mette became acquainted with Paul Gauguin, at the boarding house kept by the sculptor Aubé's wife.

<sup>2</sup>Mette Sophie Gad, born 7th September, 1850, at Vestero, See of Alborg, in Denmark. Daughter of a civic officer, Théodore Gad, and of Emilie Lund, she became at seventeen governess to the children of the politician Estrup, then Prime Minister. Pretty, intelligent, frank of speech, but rational in her ideas of life, Mette married Gauguin on the 22nd November, 1873, in the Town Hall of the 9th Arrondissement, in the Rue Drouot. The religious ceremony was celebrated the same day in the Lutheran Church in the Rue Chauchat.

<sup>3</sup>Louise Heegaard, Marie's sister.

2.

TO MRS. HEEGAARD.

Paris, 25 April, 1874.

My dear Madam,

Nothing reminds us more of friends than the seasons in which we first knew them. Spring is here; I am thinking of you and wondering if you can manage to come and see us this year: you really must have a little holiday! A warm welcome awaits you here, and I should like to know what you think of Mette: she has grown so handsome, although a trifle thin—she walks now as if her knee had never bitten the dust. You are quite right—husbands are the best doctors.

We have spent a delightful winter, some might say, a little severe, but it has been very nice in our little flat. Mette told me you are sometimes vexed at her silence—forgive the poor little woman, for she has suffered somewhat, and you know that she does not support illness with quite the courage of a Christian martyr; and then she keeps up a correspondence with her family, which occupies a little of her time. I will try to let you feel no difference by writing to you in her stead, but it is impossible to cope with her sudden attack of high spirits for despite . . . of a delightful enough . . . remains always . . . boring and disagreeable husband.<sup>1</sup>

Let me turn my eyes towards Denmark, and I catch a glimpse of two rather apathetic young girls who do not often reply to the letters we write them; and yet we were fond of them; we are still fond of them; we made a little fuss of them. I did not think I had touched their heart-strings, but I had hoped for a little loving remembrance.

Mette does not feel able to give you a sketch of the fashions, whilst, as for me, I have no idea how ladies are dressed, provided they are not ill dressed. I believe hats are extravagant this year, and that costumes will enrich the dressmakers and ruin the husbands. *Le Printemps*, your favourite shop, is the centre of curiosity and everybody is going there to see the man with the fork.

Q. Who is the man with the fork?

R. Nothing more than a man attacked by the betting mania; he betted he would stick a fork in his throat; his friends at breakfast challenged him, and he has won twice over, as the fork slipped out

<sup>1</sup>The missing words cannot be deciphered, the paper having been torn.

of his fingers and is at present in his stomach (a fact): we know the doctor who is attending him.

If you come to Paris you will go to the *Français*, where they are performing a play called the *Sphinx*; Mlle. Croirette dies every day in an alarming manner and has scored a marvellous success. I forbear giving you a description of the play, as you will read all about it in the papers.

Fritz<sup>1</sup> is in Paris at the moment, we introduced him yesterday to Madame Arosa. I believe he intends to stop here a month and to paint in a French studio. Madame Arosa is to introduce him to-day to a painter, and he is delighted.

Our poor Ingeborg will have to do without him for some time. Fortunately, the little widow did not come to Arosa's<sup>2</sup> yesterday, for if she had, poor Fritz would have been struck all of a heap by her provocative eyes and the simple and natural grace we know so well—but Ingeborg need not be jealous: I will watch out for her.

In spite of all my grievances, remember me to those young ladies.

My regards to Mr. Heegaard.

Yours very sincerely,

PAUL GAUGUIN. •

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3.

TO MRS. HEEGAARD

Paris, 8 July, 1874

I add a few words to Mette's letter to forestall your reproaches of ingratitude and indolence.

Both of us are grieved at your stay in Denmark, much too long in my opinion. I see clearly that I shall have to stay for a few years where I am, before I can slip off for a little trip to Copenhagen. I am one of those whom Fate condemns to stay at home; I have

<sup>1</sup> Fritz Thaulow, Norwegian painter, who became Gauguin's brother-in-law through marrying his wife's sister, Ingeborg Gad, from whom he was subsequently divorced.

<sup>2</sup> Gustave Arosa was Paul Gauguin's guardian. An amateur of art and literature, and possessing an excellent collection of pictures, Arosa entertained a great deal at his Saint Cloud property. By frequenting this house, Gauguin's artistic tastes were undoubtedly developed. It was through Calzado, Arosa's son-in-law, that Gauguin was offered a post in Bertin's Bank.

had more than my share of travelling and now I am obliged to keep my nose to the grindstone. We jog along comfortably enough, but we do need a few friends close handy; Bichette is always moving about: she is now at Vichy, later she goes to Switzerland. However, we don't feel her absence very much, for when she is in Paris, she never has time to see us. The Spaniards, as well as her numerous friends, take up all her time, which I quite understand—our house is so small and so empty of flatterers.

We saw Adolphe on two or three occasions; he must be quite near Rio de Janeiro by this time. Mette has just received a letter from him, which was posted in Lisbon. He is utterly worn out, and I hope the voyage will restore him.

We should, of course, be pleased to see your young Amser, but as to guiding him, I do not know what to do. As you know, I am not clear myself as to what constitutes virtue and vice. Mette could certainly give him good advice, but I doubt whether he would listen to it.

Please convey to Mr. Heegaard my regrets for my inability to serve him, as there is no business to be done here.

Regards to your two charming daughters. I am still waiting to hear from the little Marie, to whom I wrote some time ago, hoping for a reply.

Pending your visit to our little flat, I remain,

Your affectionate friend,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

4.

TO MRS. HEEGAARD.

Paris, 12 September, 1874.

My dear Madam,

While I must send you thanks for your cordial letter, I have a bone to pick with you. What do you mean by setting off on your travels without stopping in Paris, your favourite city, and where you have sincere friends. Mette would have been so happy to see you and show you her baby.

He is really pretty: this is not merely what his mother and father think, it is what everybody says. White as a swan, strong as Hercules. I do not know whether he is good-tempered, probably not, as his father is so morose. I cannot believe but that you will come

and see this little phenomenon on your return journey. Mette is not yet up and she tortures herself trying to imagine diseases that science cannot cure. Poor Mette has been very lonely; her mother would have been very useful at this time. The Arosas went sea-bathing at a little place in Brittany; they came back on Wednesday. Marguerite was looking well; I think the sea air must have done her good, counteracting anæmia, the particular blight of this century and of Paris.

Madame Fonignet must be furious at having received no news of the birth of our boy, but I fancy everything between her and us is over.

I forgot to tell you his name. It is Emil,<sup>1</sup> so you see, you guessed very nearly right. As to his godfather, we are still waiting. M. Fritz never finds it easy to make up his mind, and although he promised us to come at the beginning of the winter, I am pretty sure he will change his mind. I should, however, like to make the acquaintance of some of my family; it is wretched not being able to travel.

Oh! ungrateful Marie, your letters are undiscoverable. I have ransacked my drawer without being able to find anything. I suppose it is the language difficulty, you are afraid of being teased. Women! we always love you far too much.

Come to Paris, dear Madam, we want to see you here soon. My regards to everybody. I venture to send kisses to the two young ladies, and keep a tender place for you in the heart of your friend,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

5.

TO MRS. HEEGAARD.

No date, September, 1874.

Dear Mrs. Heegaard,

I received your letter after some little delay, owing to the different routes it took. Mrs. Fonignet sent it on to me by post. I am very grateful for your interest in me; I have not been able to give your message to the Arosa family, nor shall I be able to do so until next Sunday. As to Pepito, the rascal is treating himself to trips to Spain; he is going to escort his aunt to Madrid. I hope it will do him good, as the poor fellow's health is always a little shaky.

<sup>1</sup> Emil Gauguin, born at Paris in September, 1874.



I am relying on your care to restore to my Mette her good health, and perhaps the air of the garden will give her some of the strength she needs. You can understand my keen desire to have her home again, and you must not be angry with me if I soon carry off from you, a friend whom you love dearly.

France cannot be more smiling, so do come again to exchange a little greeting. I hope to see you before long, and this time we will try to spare you the tedium of the Fonignet household. How did you find your little Marie? I think she was a little sorry to leave her friends, but happy to return to her family—joy and sorrow, as you see, sometimes go together.

I know you would like me to come to Copenhagen and I am most grateful for the welcome you would give me, but, in all the circumstances, it is impossible. That I shall go one day, perhaps, I dare not hope. However, if Mrs. Gad can come next year to see her children, she will find a good husband and a loving son—I am sure of being both.

My regards to your two daughters and to Mr. Heegaard. Kiss my Mette, and I send you my heartfelt greetings.

Always yours,  
PAUL GAUGUIN.

6.

TO MESSRS. DILLIES & CO.<sup>1</sup>

Copenhagen (beginning of December, 1884.)

. . . He requires samples of each material, with the terms written below for identification. Kindly send him about two yards of each kind, including the small size . . . and trappings for horses. I believe this last article is very good in Northern countries. These last to be sent to Mr. Hermann Thaulow, Christiania.

As I have already informed you, my brother-in-law enjoys ample credit. In Norway pharmacies are a Government concession. He also owns a mine, for which a French Company is offering 500,000 francs. You can easily take up references, as my brother-in-law is well known in Christiania.

<sup>1</sup> Previous letters to Dillies & Co have not been found.

If therefore you have confidence, it would be most useful, indeed almost a necessity, for us to have in stock a sufficient supply of material and so avoid the continual despatch of small lots. You know how forgetful people are in business, and a customer who has to wait may change his mind . . .

I want to know if as regards Norway, which is Scandinavian but not Danish, you will let me have a commission.

If one of these gentlemen is going to Paris, I would like him to call on Mr. Thomeseau, 1, Rue d'Amboin, where I was employed, and who would give the necessary references.

Has the cloth ordered for Christiania been sent?

Awaiting your reply, I am,

Yours faithfully,

P. GAUGUIN.

7.

TO MESSRS. DILLIES & CO.

105, Gambe Kongevej,  
Copenhagen.

End December, 1884.

Gentlemen,

Do not think I have been idle, but the festivities from Christmas until New Year's Day make it almost impossible to do any business. I was informed at the Customs that the duty was 33 oere per lb., which increases the price by 92 centimes per yard, and this comes very dear in a country where they prefer things cheap and nasty. This is particularly idiotic because hemp cloth pays 0.12, cotton cloth O.K. 16 oere, and yours being considered as an *unknown* material. I am taking steps to have it classified as in the former class. On your part, you might write in German explaining that your cloth is like other hemp cloth, recovered like others, with a material, the only difference being that your recovering is by a special process which you have patented. Be good enough to do so at once, as all this delay prevents business from starting. I have made enquiries of the big steamship company, and have been told that royal authority is required to change the supplier. I will get in touch with the present supplier, who is a big merchant here, but not a manufacturer, and it is possible considerable business will result.

I have to go about things very cautiously to avoid making a

false move, which would shut the door on me. I am still waiting for the trappings and a stock of cloth from which to supply retailers. As soon as I receive these, I will go to Jutland to see the head of the Company, who happens to be a friend of my family. He has already replied once that he will not try anything new, but depend upon me, I now have the means to persuade him to change his mind.

I have an appointment with the chief physician of the hospital to discuss the small waterproof cloth: any business in that quarter will not amount to much, but would be useful as a recommendation. Kindly take urgent steps to send us in Norway and also here, the necessary material to be available after the April stocktakings.

With every wish not to be tiresome, I am compelled to broach the question of advances. I mentioned this in my last letter.<sup>1</sup> I have to pay 220 crowns for the patent, which makes a hole in my slender purse, and I ask you bluntly if you could not alter your decision.

Please go into the matter again and let me hear from you; I trouble you only because in order to obtain the necessary introductions, I have to mix much in society and am embarrassed by lack of money. Copenhagen is not like Paris: business men are not received until enquiries have been made and references taken up

- Awaiting your reply.

Yours faithfully,

P. GAUGUIN.

8.

TO MR. CELLOT.

Copenhagen, 105, Gamle Kongevej,  
Friday, 2 January, 1885.

Special Factory of  
Tilt and Imperishable Cloths.  
Dillies & Co., Roubaix.  
P. Gauguin—Agent.

My dear Cellot,

Although I am usually far from inquisitive, this time I am constrained to ask you for a lot of information about the business you offer me. I am very frank, and cannot promise you miracles.

<sup>1</sup> In August, 1884, the Gauguin family left Rouen for Copenhagen, where Mette thought she could earn money by giving French lessons. On his part, Gauguin had obtained the agency for Denmark of a Tilt Manufactory which made waterproof and imperishable cloth, Messrs. Dillies & Co., for whom he worked bravely until May, 1885.

Copenhagen is not a bit like Paris, where any intelligent man may put up a sound business proposition, and be sure that it will be examined. Here, where nearly everybody knows everybody else, one cannot offer even ingots of gold for sale, without first being introduced as a person of great responsibility, etc.

Fortunately, I have valuable contacts here, such as will within a short time introduce me everywhere; I have, however, to learn the language, to which I am applying myself industriously. All these inconveniences will persist for some time, but will end soon, especially if I can settle the question of money, which is absolutely wearing me out, and which I cannot see the end of unless I can get help and support. A difficult thing when one is abroad and the father of a family and obliged to show a bold front to the world, etc. . . . Having said this, I come to the information I want.

1. To represent a firm, especially in Denmark, there must be a firm in the first place : are you a manufacturer ? Then, once the customers are found, could I depend upon regular supplies without increase of price ?

2. Does your patent cover all Europe ?

For a long time varnish has been made which preserves metal from oxydization, so long as the metal is not exposed to rust; ships' hulls are in this category. Yours is the best, you say; I hope so, although in business one tries sometimes to persuade when one is not oversure. However, we'll let that go.

As to nets—for cod fishing—Being a sailor I can tell you that the problem was solved a long time ago, by tanning the nets to preserve them from rotting, and the fact that the nets never wear out all at once. They get torn and the tears are repaired as they happen, so that a net is in great part renewed by repairs. Your varnish will never prevent it from tearing.

3. I do not keep a shop here, but have the agency for one or more firms.

If I insist on this point, it is because in this country, where everyone is extremely inquisitive, concealment of any kind is bound to be injurious. If, as I intend to do, I offer your varnish to a big naval contractor, he will not fail to make the most meticulous inquiries in Paris about the manufacturer, even if I make out the invoice.

4. I have no capital, but in order to work at all, I must have a small stock of your products in hand, and as I sell them, I will

remit the proceeds. This involves your having great confidence in me (perhaps you haven't) but I assume you have. It would also mean a preliminary expenditure on your part of a considerable amount.

I write this hastily and tersely, but you will see what I mean, so please answer my questions and don't be offended at my insistence. My tendency is always to be too trustful and, for this reason, in spite of my intelligence, I shall always be a tenth rate business man. However, it is not mistrust which inspires my present enquiries, but a desire to know exactly where I stand.

If we come to an arrangement, I will write to my Norwegian brother-in-law, a live wire who is looking after our tilt on a fifty-fifty basis. He, better than anyone else, will know how to stick your varnish on the Norwegians. It is easier to do business with these people, who are so different from the Danes. They are really interested in new things, and quite ready to be the first to try them. Don't talk to me about conservative peoples: a republic may not be the ideal method of government, but what a spirit of initiative it gives to young men!

Cordial greetings,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

I cannot sell anything without having a definite patent, required for French articles, and which costs 340 francs!! I confess to my shame that I haven't got the money.

9.

TO MESSRS. DILLIES & CO.      Copenhagen, 7 January, 1885.

After several interviews with the Customs people, I have at last got them to agree that your tilt will be classed as cloth, provided that you send a large piece, one end being left uncovered with your patented preparation, so that they can tell exactly of what material it is composed. I assume you can let me have this.

Your tarpaulin for the Railway arrived about a month ago,

and was put to the test without delay. The officials find it very well made and easy to handle; they told me that up to the present the tests are favourable but they must be continued for several months before they can come to a decision. I have seen the cloth they use at the moment. It is a cloth of double thickness, which makes it very awkward to fold; on the other hand, yours seems to them very thin by comparison. I said to them that their cloth was so heavy because the waterproofing process was almost nil, and it is this preparation which renders it almost completely weatherproof, and lighter in weight although not quite so strong. Kindly let me know if I am right and say if your cloth is thick enough. Their covers cost them 111 francs 10 centimes. I believe yours would be much about the same price. If this is so, we may fairly hope to do good business with the Railways six months hence, provided your tilt wears as well as the heavier stuff, which will be ascertained in due course. Most of those I have seen on the carriages are in a pretty bad state.

Yours faithfully,

P. GAUGUIN. •

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10.

TO MESSRS. DILLIES & CO.      Copenhagen, 13 January, 1885.

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. I did not know of this new arrangement of my brother-in-law with Mr. Carl Mort.<sup>1</sup> However, I can vouch for his respectability, as I know who this gentleman is. He comes of a very good Danish family and has an excellent reputation, carrying on agency business in Norway. My brother-in-law may have taken him on to help in the retail trade. I have written to him for all necessary information on the matter. I may not hear from him immediately, as he is travelling in the chief towns of Norway as agent for our business. I feel confident that in a few months' time we shall see results.

In your last letter you intimated you wanted to see some results in Denmark, but please remember that I have been here

<sup>1</sup> He was referring to Mr. Carl de Morgemørne.

only a short time and I cannot force the pace. A certain diplomacy has to be exercised and many inquiries have to be made, before one finds out which is the right door to try. I get about in the business world and I have already interested many useful people. Here, everything is done very bureaucratically, and before any business will be considered by a Company, a written request must be made, which has to be vouched for as far as possible, and backed up with samples.

I have none of your circulars in German, which means I have to give many verbal explanations, which takes time. I am more than ever convinced of a certain degree of success. I am in touch with the Jutland Company; there you have a formidable competitor. For a long time Russia has supplied them with tilt which gives them every satisfaction. Find out what Russia is doing, and if possible, supply me with arguments against their products. Generally speaking, you may take it as a fact, that in the North the waterproofing process is not by way of impregnation, neither is it exactly by way of recovering a cloth. They use three layers of cloth—the middle layer is prepared with—X—and inserted between two layers of untreated cloth. This results in a heavy product, of which the surface is supple and the inside resistant.

I am very sorry I cannot persuade you to alter your decision about an advance, as this holds me up at every moment. I cannot take a cab and the days are now very short, so that I am always up against this everlasting question of money. There is a great difference between too little and unnecessary expenditure. I am obliged to dine with many persons who might be useful to me, and I shall also have to receive people, and am stopped by lack of money.

In a few days I shall have to take out of the Customs the material of which you advise me; how am I to settle the bill? All this is a worry and impedes my freedom of action. An acceptable man in whom an important firm has confidence must maintain a certain standard. Placed too low, I am a bad representative, but established on a suitable rung of the ladder, I assure you, I can bring off some good business, and yours will not have been placed in bad hands.

Yours faithfully,

P. GAUGUIN.



Landscape with cattle  
*Oil 1885 (Private collection)*



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3

4

## 11.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER.<sup>1</sup> Copenhagen, 14 January, 1885.

My dear Schuffenecker,

I have had a letter from Guillaumin;<sup>2</sup> it appears that you wanted to buy one of his exhibited pictures, but that it was already reserved. Why don't you go to him and choose another; I believe you will be glad to have one of his works, while I should be pleased to hear of a sale for this poor but highly talented artist.

As for myself, it seems to me at the moment that I am mad, and yet the more I brood at night in bed, the more I think I am right. For a long time philosophers have reasoned about phenomena which appear to us supernatural, and of which, however we have the *sensation*. Everything is there, in this word—Raphael and others, people in whom sensation was formulated before the mind started to operate, which enabled them, while pursuing their studies, to keep this feeling intact, and to remain artists. And for me the great artist is synonymous with the greatest intelligence; he is the vehicle of the most delicate, the most invisible emotions of the brain.

Look around at the immense creation of nature and you will find laws, unlike in their aspects and yet alike in their effect, which generate all human emotions. Look at a great spider, a tree trunk in a forest—both arouse strong feeling, without your knowing why. Why is it you shrink from touching a rat, and many similar things: no amount of reasoning can conjure away these feelings. All our five senses reach the brain *directly*, affected by a multiplicity of

<sup>1</sup> Emile Schuffenecker, born at Fresne-Saint-Mames (Haute Saône). This excellent impressionist painter first exhibited at the Salon of 1877 and was in 1880 one of the founders of the Independent Salon. Employed by the broker Bertin, he formed a friendship with Gauguin, whose talent he later admired without being influenced by it. Although father of a family, he several times received Gauguin when the latter was penniless and often assisted him as far as his modest means would allow. It was at his home that the artists of the impressionist and synthetic group would gather to discuss their theories and also to dine. "Give me something to eat," said Emile Bernard to him, "and I will recite poetry."

<sup>2</sup> Armand Guillaumin (1849-1927), impressionist painter. Employed in the Department of Bridges and Roads of the city of Paris, he devoted himself entirely to painting in 1891, when a bond of the Crédit Foncier brought him a Prize of 100,000 francs. He made famous the village of Crozant (Creuse), where he took up his abode.

things, and which no education can destroy. Whence I conclude there are lines that are noble and lines that are false. The straight line reaches to infinity, the curve limits creation, without reckoning the fatality in numbers. Have the figures 3 and 7 been sufficiently discussed? Colours although less numerous than lines, are still more explicative by virtue of their potent influence on the eye. There are noble sounds, others that are vulgar; peaceful and consoling harmonies, others that provoke by their audacity. You will find in graphology, the traits of candid men and those of liars; why should not line, and colours reveal also the more or less grand character of the artist. Look at Cézanne, the misunderstood, an essentially mystic Eastern nature (he looks like an old man of the Levant). In his methods, he affects a mystery and the heavy tranquillity of a dreamer; his colours are grave like the character of orientals; a man of the South, he spends whole days on the mountain top reading Virgil and looking at the sky. So his horizons are lofty, his blues most intense, and with him red has an amazing vibration. Virgil has more than one meaning and can be interpreted as one likes; the literature of his pictures has a parabolic meaning with two conclusions; his backgrounds are equally imaginative and realistic. To sum up: when we look at one of his pictures, we exclaim "Strange." But he is a mystic, even in drawing.

The farther I go into this question—the translation of thought into a medium other than literature—the more I am convinced of my theory—we shall see who is right. If I am wrong, why does not all your Academy, which knows all the methods used by the old masters, paint masterpieces? Because it is impossible to create a nature, an intelligence, a heart. The young Raphael knew all these things intuitively and in his pictures there are harmonies of line which cannot be accounted for; they are the veiled reflection of the innermost recesses of the man's mind. Look at the details—even in the landscape of a Raphael picture, you will find the same emotion as in a head. Purity pervades the whole. A landscape of Carolus Durand<sup>1</sup> is as raffish as a portrait. (I cannot explain it but I have this feeling.)

Here I am tormented more than ever by art, and neither my

<sup>1</sup> Calorus-Durand, painter (1838-1917), created a sensation at the 1865 Salon with the *Assassine*, the realism of which influenced both Courbet and the Spanish masters. A fashionable portrait painter, his art rapidly became conventional.

money worries nor my quest for business can turn me aside from it. You tell me that I should do well to join your Society of Independents; shall I tell you what would happen? You are a hundred strong: tomorrow you will be 200. Artist tradesmen are two thirds intriguers; in a short time you will be assuming the importance of Gervex<sup>1</sup> and others, and what shall we, the dreamers, the unappreciated, do? You have had a favourable press this year; next year they will stir up all the mud to fling at you, so as to appear respectable.

Go on working, *freely and furiously*,<sup>2</sup> you will make progress and sooner or later your worth will be recognised, if you have any. Above all, don't perspire over a picture. A strong emotion can be translated immediately: dream on it and seek its simplest form.

The equilateral triangle is the most firmly based and the perfect triangle. A long triangle is more elegant. We say, lines to the right advance: those to the left, retreat. The right hand strikes, the left defends. A long neck is graceful but heads on shoulders more thoughtful. But I am running away with myself and talking all kinds of rot. Your friend Courtois is more reasonable but his painting is so stupid. Why are willows with hanging branches called weeping? Is it because drooping lines are sad? And is the sycamore sad because it is found in cemeteries; no, it is the colour that is sad.

As to business, I am always at the same point, the start. I shall not see the result, if there is one, for six months. Meanwhile, I am penniless, up to the neck in squalor—which is why I console myself in dreaming.

Gradually we shall extricate ourselves; my wife and I give lessons in French: you will laugh, me, lessons in French!

I wish you better luck than ours. Regards to your wife.

P. GAUGUIN.

<sup>1</sup> Henri Gervex (1852-1929), realist painter, one of whose best canvases inspired by a de Musset poem, was refused by the 1878 Salon for alleged immorality. The police then prohibited its public exhibition.

<sup>2</sup> "You have known for a long time what it is I wish to establish: the right to date everything," wrote Gauguin to Daniel de Monfreid in October, 1902.

12.

TO CARL DE MORGEMTORNE.

Copenhagen,

Undated, January, 1885

To Mr. Carl de Morgemtorne.

I am the general agent for Scandinavia for Messrs. Dillies, and desiring to enlist your support for this business, I am writing to offer you a share of my commission for business done in Norway, viz.:

Four per cent. of the price, ex rail Roubaix, for small transactions.

Two per cent. for large transactions at a reduced price.

Kindly let me know if you are in agreement.

Yours, etc.,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

13.

TO MESSRS. DILLIES &amp; CO.

Copenhagen,

Undated, end of January, 1885.

1. I have received a reply from Norway about Mr. Carl: you can rely upon his diligence in attending to our business. He is an old insurance agent, and at present a commercial traveller. My brother-in-law having a Government pharmacy, cannot openly engage in another business, so he has taken a friend into his service, this Mr. Carl, to obviate any complaints. This is all to the good, as both have influential connections.

2. I have seen the Chief Surgeon of the Hospital and we have tested your excellent small waterproofs in every way, but they are not exactly suitable for hospitals; these gentlemen are quite indifferent to expense, wishing only to obtain the best article. They use a very flexible rubber material made with all possible care for the special purpose of the hospitals and which can be washed without fear of contamination. The Surgeon was very friendly but he could not assume such a responsibility towards his patients as to make a change. Your cloth, being impregnated only instead of being recovered, has the drawback of a rough surface. What they have is very dear but it must be admitted, perfect.

I have received a reply from Jutland, which is dubious enough, but they are prepared to make a trial. Kindly send immediately a sample like that you sent here, but as strong as possible, to try and improve on their product. I strongly urge you not to charge for it.

They are at present suffering from heavy snowfalls, and it is to your advantage for your products to be tested in cold weather, as their large cloths are stiffer in the handling than yours. I anxiously await a sample of trappings to show to an important saddler with whom I am in negotiations: without a sample, one talks to little purpose.

I have just received your letter and am glad to learn you have sent samples. But one comparison is hardly enough—I wanted to offer them retail. I hope you have sent the old tilt ordered to Norway.

Yours faithfully,

P. GAUGUIN.

14.

TO MESSRS. DILLIÈS & CO.

Copenhagen,

Undated, beginning February, 1885.

I hasten to reply to yours of the 29th January, 1885.

I am a little surprised to hear that my brother-in-law has refused to accept the parcel despatched. I say a little, as my brother-in-law is at the moment ill in bed, and in addition, he has asked Mr. Carl to attend entirely to this business, not because he is loth to promote it on my account, but because he is absolutely prevented from appearing even as a principal. His pharmacy business, as I have told you before, which is rather an important one, is held under Government and he does not want to incur the reproach of spending even a minute in any other concern. In this connection I send you the letter I have received from Mr. Carl de Morgemtorne, which will show that an hour's interview is worth months of correspondence, and that letters invariably create misunderstanding. I hope soon to proceed to Norway to put things in order; nothing but the expense of the journey delays me. I ought to mention here, something which I am sure you will appreciate. In Copenhagen as in Christiania you do not find, as may happen in

Paris or London, unreliable agents likely to run off with the goods. People here do business entirely on reputation and credit. That is why I am pleased to observe that you show less mistrust towards them, while preserving your usual caution. You may send goods on trust to Mr. Carl de Morgemtorne without risk. I have told him that I had the management of this business, but to facilitate matters, you should get into direct touch with him. On all Norwegian business, you would have to credit him with 4 per cent. and 2 per cent. and me with 6 per cent. and 3 per cent., as I bear the risk of loss at the rate of 10 per cent. and 5 per cent. If all this seems reasonable and you agree, kindly write to Mr. Carl confirming these conditions, and send him at the same time, details of prices and leaflets in German. He is an energetic man who enjoys a considerable reputation in Norway, and may be relied on to do his best.

You know better than anyone, that to introduce a novelty, perseverance and a certain expenditure are necessary at the start.

What headway am I making with the Companies? I cannot say exactly, except that I have to proceed slowly and these gentlemen will not be hurried. I shall not receive a favourable reply until later.

• One question: When your red tilt is folded, the crease shows up lighter than the rest. This looks as though it is a crack, which it is not. Could this be remedied?

Yours faithfully,

P. GAUGUIN.

15.

TO MESSRS. DILLIES & CO.

Copenhagen, 5, Gamle Kongevej, 105, 8 February, 1885.

I have only just received your parcel of tilt samples. This parcel went the round of Copenhagen, being addressed Kongevej instead of *Gamle* Kongevej. Be good enough in future to address to Copenhagen V. This letter indicates the district, the town being divided into four parts, North, South, East and West.

I have not, up till now, been able to employ myself fully, as I have not enough samples to show to the various firms. At the end

of the week, I go to Norway to put business there on a proper footing, and make all necessary arrangement with Mr. Carl. He is not entirely satisfied with 4 per cent., but after all, it is I who took the risk of starting the foreign agency, it is I who have incurred and will often still incur travelling expenses; and as, moreover, I am liable for losses, I think I may conscientiously retain an interest larger than that of my agent. However, the terms might be modified, and if it is necessary to stimulate Mr. Carl's interest, I will do so at the last moment. I am not at all inclined to be mean, and shall act for the best. On your part, grease the wheels of business, and all will go slowly but well. As to your parcel, it arrived in good condition, but what a pity the varnish was not quite dry. The paper had stuck to a large number of the articles, and I had to wash and dry them to make them presentable to customers. It would be desirable, if your resources permit, for you to have a quantity of perfectly dried material in stock. This is of capital importance at the start, particularly here, where a different method is employed. It appears to me that the preparation is inside, that is between two folds of cloth. The surface looks more attractive. Could you pass your dry cloth between two cylinders? That would improve its appearance, giving it a better polish, without lessening its suppleness and impermeability.

Yours faithfully,

P. GAUGUIN.

16.

TO CARL DE MORGENTORNE.

Copenhagen, 12 February, 1885.

I duly received your letter and if I have not replied earlier it is because I expected to go to Norway at any moment; unfortunately, I had to postpone my journey. You should have received a letter from Messrs. Dillies, to whom I wrote that we were almost in agreement. Do not be surprised if the terms I communicated to you were on the low side. In any case they are the same as those offered to Hermann. He must have made a mistake in mentioning 5 per cent. to you, as I offered him 4 per cent.



My own commission is small and I have had considerable trouble in arranging to come abroad and I went into the matter very carefully before deciding to leave my country and embark on this venture. As you rightly surmise, I have a certain amount of responsibility. I would actually prefer to give you 5 per cent., if you would agree to bear 5 per cent. of losses in the case of defaulters, which is something you could avoid in large measure, by your knowledge of buyers. Remember that in a matter like this, the exploitation of a patented article, it is only the beginning that is difficult; later the demand will grow of itself into considerable dimensions, without any special exertion on your part.

All orders coming from Norway will be placed to your credit. With the Railways alone we should be able to do 30,000 francs a year, so considerable is the wear and tear. In France a company like the West uses 400,000 francs worth of tarpaulins per annum. As you see, the commission may well reach a considerable figure. Have you any contacts with Sweden? If so, you may be able to do something there. When I come to Christiania we can discuss this, and I am sure you will find me accommodating, whatever you may have thought to the contrary at the start.

Yours sincerely,

P. GAUGUIN.

17.

TO MESSRS. DILLIES & CO. Copenhagen, 17 February, 1885.

Kindly make up 5 pieces to the following measurements:—

4 ells by 13 ells and 3 inches      4

4    „    6    „    „    1

Quality A. Northern Railway. They want one strap at each corner.

I quote the above measures as they are those used in Denmark. I think an ell is 2 feet, that is, 66 centimetres.

I should be glad if you would execute this order promptly. Make out the invoice and address to Mr. Heegaard, 37, Havergade, Gvenlages, whose order I took according to your price list.

Yours faithfully,

P. GAUGUIN.

18.

TO MESSRS. DILLIES &amp; CO. Copenhagen, 26 February, 1885.

Herewith the name of a merchant of repute who has examined your tilt and is very pleased with it. In spite of all the information I have given him about prices, he desires to ascertain the net cost by purchasing six lengths and making up the covers himself, having facilities for that purpose, and he asks me to inform you that he would like 20 yards of your tilt, of the superior quality.

He is of opinion that if unbleached tilt is shown to the Customs, the duty would be only 12 oere per lb. Immediate despatch is essential, because he sells to Sweden, and is going there in a week's time, when he will at once proceed to get orders. Most of the tilt he sells is Belgian or German and appears to me pretty bad—yours should have a good chance. Please be good enough, then, to do what is necessary to send the tilt asked for at once (green). Send the invoice to me, which I will get paid, but send the goods to his address, with Port and Customs duties for his account. We ought to be doing good business with this merchant in the future; please give me therefore your lowest quotations.

Further, I have heard from Jutland that your samples arrived in good condition and appear better than they have been using. This, from a man who was sceptical, is satisfactory as far as it goes; let us hope the tests will prove equally satisfactory. I am very hopeful about this, the more so as the tilt will be looked after by a technical friend of mine. Given these conditions, the promise for the future is excellent.

My application to the Navy has been submitted to the Minister, after having been recommended at a high level. The Secretary also, has promised to keep an eye on the matter. This is all useful, but we must not build castles in the air. Their custom is to prepare it themselves in the shops, naturally with old fashioned methods, and old habits need a lot of conquering.

Yours faithfully,

P. GAUGUIN.

19.

TO MESSRS. DILLIES &amp; CO.

Copenhagen, Undated, March, 1885.

I have been visited by an Admiral, a distant relation who is in charge of the provisioning of the Arsenal. He ordered 125 yards of tilt, *A. Black, Superior Quality*, and he led me to think that this will lead to big things.

We will try, he told me, to make you not regret leaving your country. He wants me to deliver the goods direct to him at the Arsenal without going through the Customs. Kindly therefore despatch at once to me. I will pay Customs duty and obtain repayment at the Arsenal.

So as to be on the safe side, I quoted him a high price, totalling 523 francs 20. I will adjust matters when I receive the cloth from Moller. So please make out an invoice to Chefen for Orlogsvaerftets Regnskabsvaesen, with price left blank and signed. I will collect the money when delivering the goods. It would be very kind if you would let me keep this money on account, but if this course does not meet with your approval, *rest assured, I will send the amount without delay.*<sup>1</sup>

Kindly also inform me if I must adhere to the price of 3 francs per metre; with Customs duties, we are above the German price. I know your cloth is of superior quality, but if we quoted the same price, we could get hold of all the business in a short time.

20.

TO MESSRS. DILLIES &amp; CO.

Copenhagen, 17 April, 1885.

I received notice of the receipt of the parcel for the Navy on the 15th April, but did not obtain delivery until to-day. Transport charges were 15 shillings. You see the journey took more than 10 days: in short, we may say the whole transaction took a month. I have paid the Customs 12 oere per pound, which will be the charge henceforth.

<sup>1</sup> Gauguin pocketed advances, and when he left Denmark his account was in debit. Messrs. Dillies made several requests for this money.

I have to-day seen the Manager of the Jutland Railway, to whom I was recommended by Mr. Estrup, President of the Council. I was very well received and in three months (they won't be hurried) he has promised to go into the matter carefully. He did not conceal from me that, in the interests of economy, they are now making their carriages covered, to avoid the necessity of tarpaulins. You say in your letter that I seem discouraged. This is not quite true, but I own I am tired of all these visits and interviews which promise so much but offer no glimpse of earnings until later. It all takes so long by correspondence. . . .

I have been nearly run off my feet with the Seithland people: they are not precisely accommodating. To-day I have spent five and a half hours, backwards and forwards between the Arsenal and the Customs. It must be owned that if I should earn anything with your agency I shall not be robbing anyone.

I omitted to tell you that I invoiced these goods to the Navy below the price I previously quoted them. I have added charges to the cost of goods. Kindly place this total of 400 francs to my debit, which I will retain with your kind permission, and credit me with 40 francs plus 6 francs 40 . . . <sup>1</sup> for the Heegaard order.

As soon as you have succeeded in making a non-inflammable sample, please send me one, large enough to be tested. Also samples to be left in offices, which are a good advertisement. I think a few lines in the newspapers would do no harm: everybody reads the advertisements here, as they do in England.

Yours faithfully,

P. GAUGUIN.

21.

TO SCHENHEYDER.

Copenhagen, 17 April, 1885.

To Commander Schenheyder,  
The Arsenal.

I beg to advise you that I have to-day despatched to the Arsenal, the consignment of 128 metres of tilt ordered. Unless

<sup>1</sup> . . . Words and figures indecipherable.

otherwise informed, I will hand you the invoice on Tuesday, accompanied by your written order, which I believe will be in accordance with your wishes.

The invoice with Customs duty and carriage will amount to 345 crowns. There is a small difference in your favour compared with my quoted price, as the Customs subsequently agreed on a lower rate of duty.

Yours faithfully,

P. GAUGUIN.

22.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER. 51, Norregade, Copenhagen,  
24 May, 1885.

Fabrique spéciale de  
Toiles imperméables  
et impourrissables.

DILLIES & CO., Roubaix.

P. GAUGUIN—Représentant.

My dear Schuffenecker,

You wrote to my wife, but I reply. What do you want by way of assurance? Nothing much, but in any case, set your mind at rest. No one regards you as an egoist, and it is well known with whom you are annoyed about your charges. But there is nothing to be done about all this!

I smiled at your idea of going to Durand-Ruel,<sup>1</sup> for the good man can hardly keep himself above water, and as for the trifle he has been able to do for the Pissarros and others—it is not out of friendship, but because he is involved for almost a million and he is afraid that the Impressionist painters are depreciating their goods by selling at any price they can get. You know quite well that this

<sup>1</sup> Paul Durand-Ruel (1831-1922), famous picture dealer. After taking up Corot, Courbet, Theodore Rousseau, Daubigny, Diaz, etc., he discovered the Impressionists, for whom he nearly ruined himself several times, but whose success he eventually assured both in France and in the United States. The Durand-Ruel gallery founded by his father in 1833, is now managed by the grandsons of the great dealer, Messrs. Pierre and Charles Durand-Ruel.

infernal Jesuit does not care a straw about me in my poverty. *Bertaux*! Why, it is entirely owing to him that I am in the soup, for I should never have made the break, if he had not promised to support me for a year, a promise he has not kept—he must curtail his expenses owing to the critical state of affairs, must make a position for himself, etc. Which means I cannot ask anything of him now.

Here I have been undermined by certain Protestant bigots, who know I am an infidel and consequently would like to see me down. The Jesuits are as St. John compared with the Protestant devotees, to begin with the Countess de Moltke, who agreed to pay the boarding school fees for my son Emil, only suddenly to stop doing so for religious reasons. There is nothing to be said. Many French pupils have not materialised for the same reason. As for myself, I am beginning to be fed up with it all, and think of cutting the painter and coming to Paris to work, as an operative in Bouillot's<sup>1</sup> studio—this would be for a mere pittance, but I should be free. Duty! Let anyone put himself in my place. I have done the best I can, and I yield before the utter impossibility of carrying on. Thanks once again for all your interest in us: there are not many who respect a man when he is sliding into beggary!

If you see Guillaumin, tell him a letter from him just now would give me pleasure; always when I receive a letter from France I breathe again. Six months of absolute silence have gone by. I am completely isolated. Of course, in the eyes of the family, I am a monster not to be earning money in an age when only the successful are respected.

Our little Paul<sup>2</sup> is in bed with pneumonia, which brought him to death's door, but happily the crisis is past. All this has made me very cheerful.

My wife sends all good wishes to yours. She is not too pleasant at the moment. Poverty has completely soured her, she is wounded

<sup>1</sup> Bouillot, sculptor, whom Gauguin had known when he lived at 79, rue des Fourniaux, in 1877, and who taught him the craft. Directed by the figure-carver, he modelled a bust of his wife, which Bouillot executed in marble; and later, carved that of his son Emil without supervision.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Gauguin, born in Paris, December, 1883, the artist's youngest son, known as Pola Gauguin. He wrote *Paul Gauguin mon père*, which was published in France in 1938. An English translation was published by Cassell.

especially in her vanity (in this country where everybody knows everybody else), and I am the target for all kinds of reproaches. Of course, it is because of my painting that I am not an eminent stockbroker, etc., etc.

Best wishes to you both.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

Do write me all about the Exhibition—that is what distracts me most of all. And has yours at the Tuileries been held?

I suggest an exchange. Take one of my pictures to Sinbad the Sailor and send me a copy of the *Barque de Don Juan* of Delacroix, if not too dear. I assure you I live only when I withdraw to an artistic city of the mind. Have you noticed that this man had the temperament of the wild beasts—which is why he painted them so well. Delacroix's drawings always remind me of the lithe and sinewy movements of the tiger. You cannot tell where the muscles are attached in this superb animal, and the turn of a paw suggests the impossible, even when real. In the same way, Delacroix's arms and shoulders always turn back in a wholly impossible and irrational manner, but always express the reality of passion.

The draperies twist and twine like a spotted snake enraged. Be that as it may and think what you will of it, his Don Juan's boat is the breath of a powerful monster and I should like to refresh myself by a sight of it. All those famished people alone on the terrifying ocean, having only one dread—to be the next to draw the unlucky number from the hat. Everything shrinks in the face of hunger. There is nothing but painting, no still-life deception. The boat is a toy, which has been built in no shipyard. Mr. Delacroix is no sailor, but what a poet! To my mind he did well not to imitate Jerome in archaeological exactitude.

And to think that Mr. Wolff<sup>1</sup>, has written in the *Figaro* that not one of Delacroix's pictures was a masterpiece—always incomplete, he says. Now that he is dead, he becomes a genius, but his pictures are not perfect. Look at Bastien Lepage<sup>2</sup>; here is a painstaking man, conscientiously probing nature in his studio. Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Albert Wolff, journalist and art critic, who waged violent warfare against the impressionist painters in the *Figaro*.

<sup>2</sup> Bastien Lepage (1848-1884), a painter of peasant life and portraitist. He was regarded for a time as the rising hope of the realist school.

Wolff is far from suspecting that Delacroix is not only a great draughtsman of figures, but a pioneer of boot, that his stroke is a means of emphasising an idea. However, these things cannot be explained.

I have had no works exhibited here. One day I will tell you how the exhibition was closed at the end of five days, by official instructions, how serious criticisms in my favour were suppressed in the newspapers. Of all the dirty intrigues! All the old academical clique were trembling as if they were dealing with a Rochefort in art, flattering enough for the artist, but disastrous in the result.

In Copenhagen I had to get a frame made by a joiner, as the frame-makers would lose all their other customers if they made a frame for me—and this in the 19th century! But if we are of no account, why all this uproar? We shall have no more painters, and the public and my painting will fall into inanition, smothered in ridicule and pity. Granted one has an imperfect talent, but a talent nevertheless—and to find doors slammed everywhere! We must confess that we are the martyrs of painting. Tush! Human stupidity is almost as strong as the vanity of mortals!

## 23.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, 9 August, 1885.

My dear Mette,

I write you a few lines only: Messrs. Dillies continue to pester me, and I do not know what to reply as I cannot let them into family secrets; and moreover, they would not understand, no frank and honest man being able to imagine such things. They have just learnt that the two pieces of tilt which Hermann ordered and which were sent in December last, have been refused.

Suppose for a moment that your brother-in-law, once his enthusiasm had evaporated, discovered that, as a pharmacist, he could not handle anything else—is this a reason for leaving in the lurch one from whom he had ordered something? Let him settle, at least for the goods ordered before he abandoned the affair.

Now that your sister has succeeded in pushing me out, I need



not remain any longer for this reason,<sup>1</sup> and there is no question of the family honour.

Write to your sister Pylle that all this is extremely harmful to you, and that Hermann must settle all the business with the customers. Whatever happens, Hermann should write fully to these people, in German, if he likes, but write he must.

I have enough worries without having all credit in my own country destroyed by the fault of others. Does it not occur to you that I have need of my reputation for integrity here, now that I have to start all over again? To clear up other people's muddles, and to keep starting all over again is, I confess, quite beyond me.

I have not yet received my packing case, and I want it in order to arrange the sale of what it contains. Winter is coming and I shall be without my tools.

Reply to me and write at once to Norway. I want an answer that will dispose of the matter once and for all.

Kisses to all the family.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

24.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, 19 August, 1885.

My dear Mette,

I see from your letter that you are still away, from which I conclude that friends are caring a little about you, and in the midst of all my vexations, it is something to know that you are not altogether neglected. As soon as you have a reply from Hermann, let me know, as I have not as yet sent any word to Dillies; my position in regard to the firm has become so false owing to the events in Norway, that I cannot give them all the facts, and I am waiting to report a satisfactory conclusion to the whole business.

You ask me what I am doing this winter. I hardly know myself, everything depends upon the resources at my disposal. Nothing can be started with nothing. I have no money, no house, no furniture—only a promise of work from Bouillot if he has any. If

<sup>1</sup> Exasperated by his wife's lack of understanding and by the hostility shown by her family, having abandoned all hope of improving his material situation, Gauguin left for Paris in June, 1885, taking with him his son Clovis. They lodged in cul-de-sac Fremin



Martinique Women. Pen drawings  
1887 (*Collection Maurice Malingue*)



he has, I shall rent a little studio from him and work and sleep there. I shall buy whatever food I can afford. If I sell some pictures, I shall go next summer to an out of the way spot in Brittany to paint pictures and live economically. Brittany is still the cheapest place for living. When I get over the worst, if business looks up, and my talents get suitably rewarded, I shall think of settling down somewhere.

On your part, try to make me known in Denmark. This, if you succeed, should benefit you as much as me, and is the surest means of bringing us together again.<sup>1</sup>

I still have no news of the packing case. You might make enquiries in Copenhagen. It must have been properly addressed, otherwise I should not have received advice that it was on its way. I cannot think what has happened. I have no linen. My pictures were advertised at a dealer's, and I may miss sales owing to their non-arrival. I do not know if you have put my personal belongings in. In any case, I shall want them this winter—except the hat; I have no mind to buy new clothes. Do you think of making me a smock out of the remaining material; this would be most useful for working in.

As to the big order, perhaps these gentlemen are mistaken, and it is only sail-cloth.

In any case, I know nothing of it and Colonel Tistrup ought to know—did you see Colonel Tustrup when you were with your cousin in Jutland? And do ascertain if the Navy people are satisfied with their supplies. This is worth looking into, and might lead to big business.

*Kiss all the children.*

Isn't Falstett foolish to get married.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

<sup>1</sup>What happened was the opposite. Gauguin, in fact, was incensed at seeing his wife continually demanding canvases which she sold fairly well without ever sending him money. Thus in 1896 he wrote to Daniel de Monfreid: "My advice to prepare my future by selling in Denmark only benefited my wife without any chance for me to enjoy the fruits. I am certain that the canvases despatched by Schuffenecker will be quickly sold and that my wife will clamour for others; this is what I want—when my wife has sold the canvases, write her that, according to my strict orders, you will send her 3 canvases only in return for an advance payment of 400 francs, which is a third of the value sent previously. I want (in short) one third of the sale of my pictures, and as I have no confidence, I want it in advance. (Let this be understood.)"

TO HIS WIFE.

Dieppe, 19 September, 1885.

My dear Mette,

Since my last letter, I have been travelling. I have arrived here at Dieppe,<sup>1</sup> where I stay two or three days, before spending about three weeks in London, you know where. As you must have seen in the Copenhagen newspapers, the Spanish business has grown confused and this of course, assists the little development we are seeking. It is then only a question of time and I have not failed to take steps to renew the friendships formed. For the future therefore the business is almost certain. But as for the present!

Schuffenecker writes me that Mr. Bouillot regrets he has no work for me, as Mercier thrust on him a figure carver for the work on which I counted. I see in all this some dirty work which I dare not unravel. Have you written Mrs. Bouillot? I know your desire is to see me on the Bourse.

I confess your present silence seems to me extraordinary—a month has gone by without a word from you. I am still awaiting an answer about the Norwegian business before replying to Messrs. Dillies. You have the children with you, don't forget, and their health cannot be a matter of indifference to the absent one. Try then to write more often and always address letters care of Schuffenecker, where I shall be in three or four days' time. I have no notion what I shall attempt when I return to Paris, without money and without furniture and above all, without work.

Dillies' business grows day by day in France and Belgium. At the Antwerp Exhibition their tilt carried off the medal far and away above all others.

The packing case has at last arrived, after being detained in the Customs; when I return I will see what is in it. They read the address as rue Boulevard. Your indecipherable writing again. In despatching cases you must take the utmost care, or you will have

<sup>1</sup> Nothing is known about this visit of Gauguin to Dieppe nor of his stay of three weeks in London, referred to in this letter. Jacques Emile Blanche, who stayed in Dieppe in 1885 with Fritz Thaulow, mentions in a book the painter's presence, the extravagance of his attire and a certain wild air, which impressed his father, Dr. Blanche, famous alienist, as signs of megalomania.

no end of a bother. I am now suffering from violent rheumatic pains in the shoulder, another of the delightful mementoes I have brought away from Denmark—but why bewail the past! If only this were all, I should congratulate myself on having quitted it so cheaply. Unfortunately, I expect anything from your country and your family.

As you know I have a sort of instinct which enables me to divine what is happening, and I am sure that at this moment your dear sister is up to her tricks. The blow dealt me was a violent one, but I can stand up against it, especially at the moment, when I have some trumps in my pack, brought from London.

Kiss all the children for me.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

c/o M. Schuffenecker, 29, rue Boulard.

26.

TO HIS WIFE. Paris, Undated, beginning of October, 1885.

My dear Mette,

My sister<sup>1</sup> has just brought Clovis back to me, regretting that she cannot have him any longer; as I cannot get any work from Bouillot and painting is under a cloud, I have to think what to do for both of us. I am therefore seeking a modest position on the Bourse; and it is a great pity I have no bedding here. I must try and get this for the child's sake. I do not know yet how I am going to buy it. I have looked over the things you have sent me; there are a lot of them. I suppose it isn't your intention to give my fur coat to your brother? *I had hoped you would have sent it to me*, as well as the shirts and collars I asked for.

Try to get translations otherwise than through your sister so that you may establish an independent connection and then you might be able to continue translation *even in France*—if one day there is an escape—and you could thus aid the household a little. See Falstett's friend. Weeping gets us nowhere, we must think of the

<sup>1</sup> Marie Gauguin, born at Paris in 1847, had married a Chilean business man, Juan Uribe.

future. I might receive 600 francs<sup>1</sup> in a few days from the sale of a Pissarro and a Renoir; as soon as I have them, I will send you 200 francs.

At the moment, I have only my summer trousers, which are well worn, and moreover make me look ridiculous in this wintry weather. It is very important I dress decently for the Bourse and I had hoped you would have packed my winter trousers in the case, but you have not sent a single pair. You must make up another parcel containing my winter outfit, and if you can, a counterpane and a quilt.

I must rent a small flat, and I shall have to hire two beds, one for Clovis and one for me. You know what this costs, and it is foolish to buy new things when one has an abundance of them in Denmark. Size up the position and put your best foot foremost. You can send the parcel carriage forward, but address it clearly to Favre, 19, rue Perdonnet, where I am from now on. As soon as I get a position on the Bourse and find I am able to live, I will send you a little money. And do what you can to keep our valuables together, the furniture as well as my Pissarro pictures. This is all very disjointed, but I have so much to fluster me—to find work, money and a flat and to fetch Clovis, who for the next eight days is staying with Mr. Jobbé-Duval.<sup>2</sup> He returned from the country in splendid health: strange how the air of France improves him. He looks better every day, with sparkling eyes and a brilliant complexion. Your country does not suit the children. I forgot to suggest that you should give the carrier specific instructions to despatch from Copenhagen direct to Paris; otherwise, your parcel will go via Cologne and will be shipwrecked in the Customs.

Include in the parcel, my fencing things.

Write me soon.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

I send you the decision giving the sole agency. Messrs. Dillies have written to Bjorn. Try to get him to reply.

<sup>1</sup> With his profits from speculating on the Bourse, Gauguin had made a collection of impressionist paintings, comprising works of Pissarro, Monet, Renoir, Guillaumin, Sisley and Cézanne, which, in 1885, he valued at more than 15,000 francs.

<sup>2</sup> Jobbé-Duval, pupil of Ingres, and member of the neo-classical school. He worked on the frescoes of the Church of Saint Supplice in 1859. He owned the pavilion which Gauguin had rented in the Rue Carcel in 1879.

27.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, 13 October, 1885.

My dear Mette,

I have your letter which crossed my last. I do not know which way to turn. The sale on which I counted has slipped through my fingers and I have rented a small flat, 10, rue Cail, next to Sinbad. Within the next five or six days I must furnish it somehow to shelter Clovis and me and I have no money. In short, business is dead for everyone at the moment; which is why I am making enquiries now about a position on the Bourse, in the hope of finding one in a month or two's time—which will probably be badly paid and devoid of prospects.

There is nothing for it but to hold out until better times in painting, as Bouillot has no work. As to Clovis, he goes to school next door, and when I am not here, the concierge, who is a good sort, looks after him, sometimes in her own flat, sometimes the Sailor. You need not be anxious about him. If you can send him a jersey, so much the better, for he could do with it.

Send me some bedding, coverlets only—not the bed itself: one can get wooden beds for almost nothing at the stores.<sup>1</sup> But send all this without delay, and make sure the carrier understands what he has to do.

I haven't many sheets.

I am very rushed this morning and must stop.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

28.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, Undated, 20 October, 1885.

My dear Mette,

I was very disappointed with the packing case which I received on the 9th and for which I paid 15 francs on delivery here—it weighed 15 kilogrammes. I thought it would have contained the bedding but no. You should have put the piece of fur in the pockets for my overcoat collar. Clovis is at present sleeping on a little bed

<sup>1</sup> L'Hôtel des Ventes rue Drouot.



I have hired, and I, on a mattress with my travelling rug. You know how expensive bedding is. Two mattresses at least and a pillow for Clovis—blankets and quilts do not weigh much and would not cost more to send than the carriage on the last case. You can get a large parcel skilfully made up without a case at all, using packing canvas and trussing it with straw. Immediately, for we are freezing in the night and *I have not a penny to buy bedding.*

You might also put in a little linen, two pairs of sheets, pillow-cases. Send it like the last packing case, per steamer to Havre, which is the quickest and surest way. Pack my box of crayons in the middle of all this.

I will write you at greater length soon; at the moment, I am too worried and exasperated by this bedding question.

The way you look after children in Denmark, you must be at your wits end with little Paul who catches cold so easily; as soon as I have the wherewithal to buy homeopathic remedies I will send you some, to stave off a cold whenever the symptoms appear. Aconite at once, and then mercury. As for yourself, that is another matter. Worry has a great effect on your constitution, and the best medicine would be a little peace of mind and that you don't seem to want. You excite yourself needlessly over nothing, and all the more so, when there is really something serious the matter. What can we do about it!

In your own country, where you could properly expect help and protection, those best able to serve you, have been of no assistance to you. Do not fret about Clovis. Children of his age do not know what suffering is, provided they are loved a little, and as to food, this is not difficult, especially as the best morsels are kept for him. With an egg and a little rice he makes a good meal especially when there is an apple for dessert. Sinbad who has not a penny himself finds means, however, to help me a little at the moment. Do not give way to dreaming, especially as the most tried of the two is myself, living in one room without furniture and with four bare walls to cheer us up.

Your husband,

PAUL GAUGUIN,

10, r. Cail.

29.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, 2 November, 1855.

My dear Mette,

I do not know what is happening to you, you wrote two letters in succession, and then suddenly dead silence. I am still waiting for the *wænen* circular translation. Have you sent off the things I asked for? I feel their want pretty severely at present. Clovis has no woollen vest to put on, otherwise he is well enough. I am always on tenter-hooks about the sale of pictures and I have all my work cut out these days to keep us alive. I have found nothing yet on the Bourse, there is so little business doing and so few vacancies.

I see from the papers that Danish politics are a little agitated at this moment and that your dear Estruup has been a target: it is true they have foolishly missed him. You ought to know that nothing is to be expected from this quarter; the ruling class is so little progressive while the nobility is a shadow of its former self and imagines that it owes no duties towards the weak, while always demanding respect and servility.

I have received the stockings for Clovis; he now has something to put his feet into for some time. He is very good and plays quite alone in his little corner, without bothering me; he sometimes asks where his mother is and when she will come. You will find he has none but good memories of you; let us hope the others will not be brought up in ignorance of their native language and their wretched father<sup>1</sup>—it will take me a long time to swallow that!

I dined Thursday with the Jobbés: the old chap is as lively as ever and asked me to send you his kind regards. I spent a very miserable day this Sunday, the sky being overcast as it so often is in Denmark; fortunately, the Sailor, my neighbour, came this evening with his sweetheart to dine at the house.

It is a welcome refuge for him from domestic irritations, as he often quarrels with his father.

Write me soon what you are doing. Have you plenty of pupils? What about Bjorn?

A kiss from Clovis.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

<sup>1</sup> Gauguin had a preference for Aline and Clovis, whose sensibility he divined. He always reproached his wife with making Emile, Jean and Pola, Danes in language and education.

30.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, Undated, end November, 1885.

My dear Mette,

I answer by return of post, so that you can reply forthwith as to the sale of the pictures, about which I am very uneasy. I left the pictures in Denmark, and at the rate they are going off, one day I shall have nothing left. I am anxious about my two Cézannés, which are rare of their kind, as he finished but few, and one day they will be very valuable.

Sell rather the sketch by Degas, as only he, it must be confessed, sells very readily, and it should fetch much more than 200 crowns. I leave you a free hand since *you are in need* and, in default of money from me, you have now a resource here; but the sale of the Manet and the Miss Cassett, must be stopped—or one day I shall have nothing.

*The important thing is to push mine.*

Do not worry about Clovis; he has all he wants, except little vests under his shirt. It is extremely cold at this moment, and I feel keenly the need of a mattress and quilts. Who knows, I may have them one day. You have only given me three pairs of sheets, which means that I cannot replace them as they go to the wash, one pair for Clovis and a pair for me. And my linen shirts?

I am in a hurry to catch the post.

Goodbye for the present.

P. GAUGUIN.

I have received no news of Elizabeth Moller; moreover, I don't want to see any *Danish women* here.

31.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, Undated, about 20 December, 1885.

My dear Mette,

I would point out that your letters always arrive a month after mine, so that you never reply to my questions. I asked you for the translation of the *weuen* document; every day I am bothered

for it and these gentry even ask if I have a situation and when I hope to repay their advances. Thus I require the translation and to know if Bjorn expects to do any business in tilt.

I recommended you to exhibit something for Christmas, and to make arrangements for this with Phillipsen; *quid*? Your wonderful sister-in-law whom you seem to commiserate seems to be a humbug. She knew I was here without money, and did not even offer me hospitality in her fine flat until I got out of difficulties. As I did not visit her, she decided the other day to come and see how I was, bringing me the child's garments which the Danish woman had left with her eight days before. Her only sign of interest was to find the floor unpolished, as if I was going to polish it! I was not painting, but had just finished a portrait of a man which, of course, she found frightful in its impressionism.

When announcing her departure for America she bade me tell her where Clovis was in case I was not here, so that she might come and say goodbye, which meant in plain English; don't send him to me, he is not wanted.

Don't bother about Marie then, I beg of you; she pays her debts in words instead of actions, more so now than ever. As for me, the situation never varies. It is winter and I cannot paint without a model; business is worse than ever in France. I have been promised a post as advertising manager<sup>1</sup> with 200 francs per month, but it has not yet materialised. For the last month it has been cold here, not to mention the snow, and I am sleeping on a plank wrapped up in my travelling rug; the worries of the day are balanced by the insomnia of the night.

I have been pursued by annoyances all the week: after telling someone on the Bourse that Cellot<sup>2</sup> was a ponce and a sharper, the thing got round, which impelled this gentleman, ill-advised by Esteleta (swashbuckler of the worst type) to send me his second. After discussions, we arranged for a duel by pistols because Cellot was alleged to have palpitation of the heart; but at the last moment Cellot backed out, not wanting to fight an Ishmael like me.

<sup>1</sup> Of a firm specialising in railway advertising, Gauguin received his contract on the 26th February, 1866, but declined the post.

<sup>2</sup> This Cellot is the same man to whom Gauguin wrote on 2nd January about business affairs which might have been the cause of the difference.

I need Emil's birth certificate, *which must be sent by return of post.*

I thought Mrs. Adler was to buy the *Snow Scene*.

Kiss the children for me.

Your husband,

PAUL.

Emil should write me every month in French, I see that you no longer speak the language at home.

32.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, 29 December, 1885.

My dear Mette,

I have at last received the bedding which is some comfort, as it freezes hard every day. I have also received your letter with the translation, but, unfortunately, without the birth certificate, so that I had to pay 2 francs 60 to get one at the Town Hall, besides delaying me.

I am scarcely surprised at the refusal of my pictures in the midst of the Christmas daubs and it does not upset me, but if one does not send one cannot say anything. The malevolence must be recorded, that is all, and it must not be kept secret. If you could even get it into the paper, it would be publicity and one day we shall see who was right.

In March we are going to hold a very comprehensive exhibition<sup>1</sup> including the new impressionists who have talent. All the schools and studios have been discussing it for some years and this exhibition is likely to make a great stir; perhaps it will prove the turning of the tide—we shall see. Picture dealing is completely dead here now and it is quite impossible to sell paintings, especially the orthodox. What used to sell for 1,500 to 2,000 francs at the dealers now fetches 100 francs with a 50 franc frame. It is a great point in our favour, *but for the future.*

<sup>1</sup>The eighth and last exhibition of painting of the Company of Painters, Sculptors and Engravers was held at 1, rue Lafitte, from 15th May to 15th June, 1886. The presence of Gauguin had, as in the fifth and sixth exhibitions of 1880 and 1881, alienated Claude Monet.

You are always the same, not looking where you are going, falling and hurting yourself. According to your letter, you seem to have spent Christmas alone, and it looks as if your family haven't much use for you. What has happened to these people, alleged to be so hospitable, and this family which you lauded to the skies to me—all unworthy as I was to tie their shoe strings? Perhaps one day you will be able to tell whether a door is open or shut. Anyhow, recriminations are worse than useless; after all, to do ourselves justice, we haven't stolen anything from them. As to being reunited one day, I don't think about it, as I cannot see how it can be done. Without funds, I cannot summon the energy to give you the comfortable life you need.

Kind thoughts to the children.

Your husband,

PAUL GAUGUIN,

10, R. Cail.

33.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, 2 January, 1886.

My dear Mette,

The Dillies people have written me that they intend to wind up their business in Denmark, about which they wish to hear nothing more. They are dunning me for repayment of the advances. They want the agent to send them the three pieces of tilt that were in the house. You wrote me that Bjorn took them: does he intend to buy them? Have you been to the Navy Office to ask if they were satisfied with their trials? See to this as quickly as possible and try to make Bjorn write them. You realise what an embarrassment it is for me with these gentlemen. In France they are manufacturing 1,000 metres per day. Try and settle up this business better than the Norwegian one. I will pay them the balance one of these days, out of my salary, when I have one. Yesterday was New Year's Day and Clovis sends you his wishes for a happy new year. Thank Emil for the nice letters he sends me.

Your husband,

PAUL.

They complain about no word from Copenhagen.

Just as I was sending my letter, I received one from you fretting about Clovis. He is much better and at this moment is playing happily, cutting up newspapers. I am glad that you have got over your fall and that work gives you some satisfaction. You are wrong to think I am discouraged; I am penniless, it is true, but I hope to earn money some day; enough to be free and have peace of mind. Do not be grieved if you cannot assist me, I want nothing from you and if I got you to send me a little bedding, it is because that of all the furniture I left behind<sup>1</sup> I took only the minimum of what I required.

34.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, 27 February, 1886.

My dear Mette,

I have your letter which gives such a doleful picture that I will try to agree with you, but I must confess that your plight does not look so pitiful to me. You are in a pretty, comfortably furnished house, with the children around you, engaged on a laborious task but one which pleases you: you see people, and as you enjoy the company of women and of your own people, you ought to be satisfied sometimes. You are enjoying the amenities of marriage without being bothered by a husband. What more do you want, except a little more money, like many others.

Whereas I have been turned out of my house and am living in one room with a bed, a table, no firing and seeing nobody. Clovis is a hero; when we sit down together at table in the evening with a crust of bread and a relish, he forgets how greedy he used to be; he says nothing, asks for nothing, not even to play and goes quietly to bed. Such is his daily life; he is quite adult, he grows every day, but is not very well, always has headaches and a certain pallor which worries me.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In October, 1884, Mette Gauguin had despatched from Rouen to Copenhagen the furniture, bedding, linen and pictures, leaving nothing in France. It may be surmised that henceforth she intended to live in Denmark.

<sup>2</sup> Of delicate health, Clovis Gauguin was to die in June, 1900, aged 21, of blood poisoning following an operation on the hip. As Gauguin was no longer in correspondence with his wife after the death of his daughter Aline, and it seems that neither Monfreid nor Schuffenecker advised him of his son's premature death, the painter could never have known this new calamity.

You are quite wrong to think I am angry. I have succeeded in hardening myself and feel nothing more than disgust at all that has happened. If the children are forgetting me to-day I am quite indifferent even to that. Moreover, I envisage no possibility of ever seeing them again. Would to God that death claimed all of us. It would be the best gift he could bestow on us.

The future in store for them is not exactly rosy but to bring them up to become educated workers or beggars is an utterly false calculation.

Do not worry about forgiveness of your faults, I have forgotten all that long ago; even your sister who acted most wickedly and stupidly then, now seems to me a woman like other women. I was always wrong to believe in decency.

All is forgotten, Good-bye.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

35.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, about 25 April, 1886.

My dear Mette,

Every day I have been meaning to write you. What would you, time passes with so little alteration of bad luck that I see myself sinking deeper into the mire and becoming inert and almost insensible. They are talking of war here; it is a door of escape for which I hope but don't believe in. I should welcome the coming of that day, and would not fail to seize the opportunity of taking part.

I have not sent you Clovis's boots; at the last moment I found a way to stretch the leg so that the foot could be got in. By putting wool in the toe, it will do. I have been unable to see him<sup>1</sup> since New Year's Day, as I owe the school a whole term's fees and I am supposed to be travelling. Winter this year is more severe than ever, and it is now freezing, specially for my comfort. Water is coming through the walls and the pains in my shoulder are starting again.

You do not mention the swelling in your breast; by now you ought to know whether it is serious. Your last letter is strange

<sup>1</sup> Clovis was then at school at Antony (Seine).



with your suicides and your love, which has just sprouted as if by magic; however, love at a distance doesn't cost much. It is with you as with me; now that you are no longer there, I feel I go on loving you, and you will see that in ten years we shall be compelled to see each other again, if we have to burn the place down.

Pay attention to one thing which may be important; I see from your letters you are forgetting how to write French, and apart from the Danish idioms that you use, you also make numerous spelling mistakes, which you used not to do.

So your dear baby takes after you? So much the better. And how is his delightful little character developing? Now not one of the children need speak French. Your family must be satisfied with winning all along the line.

There you all are, all Danes!

Love and kisses to all of you.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

P.S. Necessity knows no law, and sometimes forces men out of their social confines. When the little one sickened with small pox, I had twenty centimes in my pocket and for three days we had been eating dry bread on credit.

Distracted, I thought of offering my services to a billposting firm as a bill poster at the dépôts. My gentlemanly appearance made the manager laugh. But I told him quite seriously that I had a sick child and that I wanted work. I have therefore been posting bills for 5 francs a day. Meanwhile Clovis was in bed with fever, and in the evening I went home to look after him. This occupation lasted three weeks, and to-day I have been engaged by the Manager of the Company as Inspector and Secretary of the Board at 200 francs a month. It seems they think I'm intelligent, and in a year's time I shall have a better position. They are now engaged in negotiations to start an agency in Madrid, of which they will put me in charge, at a salary of 300 francs a month, plus lodging and 20 per cent. commission. The Company is wealthy and for 30 years has been engaged in an expanding business. See what a fine future is opening for me! The present is still hard, but things are looking up, and a distinct improvement on the past.

Your Danish self-esteem will be shocked to have a husband who is a bill poster. But what would you; not everyone has ability.

Don't worry about the little one, he gets better and better, and I do not contemplate sending him back to you; on the contrary, as I get more bills to post, I think of sending for the other children.

You know I have the right to do so.

You ask me to reply as placidly as you write, so I have gone very calmly through all your letters which tell me quite coolly and reasonably enough that you have loved me, but that you are only a mother and not a wife, etc. . . . these are very pleasant memories for me but they have the great drawback of leaving me no illusion about the future, so you mustn't be surprised if one day, when my position has improved, I find a woman who will be something more to me than a mother, etc. . . .

I realise that you regard me as devoid of all attraction, which is an incentive for me to prove the reverse. Perhaps it will be easier in Spain. Meanwhile go on as you are doing, looking the world in the face, full of your duties, your conscience clear, for there is only one crime, adultery. Apart from that, everything is right. It is not just for you to be turned out of your home, but quite in order that I should be turned out of mine. so don't take it to heart if I set up another. And in the latter I shall be able to post bills. We all blush in our own way.

Regards to your family,

Your husband,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

As for my friends who gossip and who are not yours, let me tell you that all this tittle-tattle comes from people who are not French, consequently *your friends*.

36.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, 24 May, 1886.

My dear Mette,

More than two months have gone by and you have given no sign of life. It was I who wrote the last letter.

You sulk to gratify your self-esteem; what matters one pettiness more or less, and good God, if you think you are doing well, go on, it is a course that does you honour. A truce to compliments. At

our Exhibition<sup>1</sup> I saw again some worthy Danes, Krojer, Dolhmann, Lund, etc. . . . They always come to see if there is anything good to pick up from us. I blew up Krojer who did not know whether he was on his head or his heels. I saw in the Salon the famous Brandès, who pretended not to recognise me. However, he was less interested in the painting and me than in the fashionable ladies moving about the official fane.

Clovis is at present at school in the country; quite well (it seems) for I have not dared to go and see him, not having the wherewithal to pay next month's fees.

Yesterday I saw the Jobbés, who send you their kindest regards.

I have seen my sister, to whom you write such long letters. To console me she shouts everywhere from the housetops that I am a wretch, that I left Bertin for painting, that this poor woman, without a roof, without furniture, without support has been abandoned by this dreadful painter.

I believe in fact that the mob is always right, that you are angels and I an atrocious scamp, but I make proper amends, I grovel at your feet, as the end approaches, it is my duty to pull myself together.

How is little Paul?

I kiss you,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

### 37.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Paris, May, 1886.

My dear Mette,

What a long time I have been<sup>2</sup> without news of you and the children; I know you are very busy translating Zola's book, his worst book from every point of view.

Last Sunday I saw the Jobbés, who also complained of receiving no word from you since the last letter that Mother Jobbé wrote you. This does not concern me. The Heegaards must have paid their

<sup>1</sup> The eighth exhibition of painting, 1, rue Lafitte, of the 15th May to 15th June, where Gauguin exhibited 19 impressionist canvases, including *Cows Restings*, *Willows*, *The Church*, *View of Rouen*, *Still Life With Apples*



Portrait of the Sculptor Aubé  
*Oil (Musée de Beaux Arts, Petit Palais, Paris)*



usual visit to Paris; this I know from Marie who told me she had a call from Mrs. Heegaard. Unfortunately or otherwise, she was not at home that day.

To go back to the beginning, I think you are right in doing a little translation there in spite of the small returns at the start. Danes pay so badly as a rule that this does not surprise me. What I would not advise you to do is to attempt to explain slang terms; it is better to translate them by an equivalent in the Danish language and even leave some of the words in the original French.

In your last letter no mention was made of little Aline, I thought she was to come to Copenhagen with your sister Pylle. How is she? Is her hair growing? I urge you to have it cropped a little as this makes it grow better later on. Perhaps you prefer the opposite. In that event my advice will not be taken.

Clovis is still at his little school in the country, and will also be there next month, Marie having decided to pay the fees for the month.

And so your sister is to become a Minister's<sup>1</sup> lady? It would seem that the hour approaches when she will be able to display herself in all the effulgence of her virtue.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

38.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Paris, end of May, 1886.

Dear Mette,

I have received the photos of the two children. Little Paul is recognisable, but I confess I am amazed at the change in Jean, so much so that at first I thought someone else must have posed. However, he appears to be developing like the others in height and breadth. Before I see him again there will be many more changes. I am glad you have got through the winter passably, it is quite enough for one to suffer hunger.

My best course would be to slip away to Brittany and live in a boarding house for 60 francs a month, where I could work.

<sup>1</sup> George Brandès (1842-1927), famous Danish literary critic, born in Copenhagen, who had married one of Mette Gauguin's sisters, and whom the painter later accused of having exploited his wife's distress to buy from her cheaply canvases of his impressionist collection.

Our exhibition put impressionism on the map, and I have had considerable success Braquemond,<sup>1</sup> the etcher, bought from me with enthusiasm a picture for 250 francs and has put me in touch with a ceramist who intends to make artistic vases. Delighted with my carving he has asked me to execute, at my convenience, during the winter, pottery work to be sold on a fifty-fifty basis. This might turn out to be a profitable sideline. Aubé used to work for him, these pots kept him alive, and that is something.

In any case, this is only for this winter, and I am most anxious to paint some pictures in Brittany. If you could sell my Manet locally, I could pay Clovis's fees for some months, otherwise I am at the end of my tether. I have been offered a berth as labourer on a plantation in the South Seas, but this would be to abandon all my hopes for the future, which I dare not do when I feel that with patience and a little help art can still bring me some sunshine.

I have received from Emil a letter in dreadful French, one day none of the children will be able even to speak it. You hold the trump cards, everything belongs to you and I have nothing to say.

The purport of your letter is extremely interesting, it amounts to this "I am well enough here, so are my children—you are wrong, Clovis and you have nothing. I want nothing better than to remain good friends, otherwise I stay quiet in my corner." Oh! you women, you have a philosophy of your own. Anyhow, *Vea victis*.

Hermann has gone mad. So much the happier for him. Someone looks after him.

Goodbye for the present.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

39.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Paris, early June, 1886.

My dear Mette,

On Thursday next, the 12th, I shall be packing up my things and as I cannot say where I shall be after then, having no fixed abode, please write henceforth care of Schuffenecker, 29, rue Boulard. I will go there from time to time to see if anything has turned up.

<sup>1</sup> Felix Bracquemond (1833-1914), painter and etcher, one of the best aquafortists of the 19th century.

I want to go to Brittany where I can live cheaply, but I cannot contrive to collect the cash for my support. However, we won't discuss this again. Some time ago I saw Bouillot, who has work for a year; another one who finds it easier to make promises than to keep them.

He has not given a moment's thought to my existence, and this winter I must work at carving and pottery. He told me that Mrs. Bouillot owed you a letter for a long time but that she is too lazy to write and that you must not be cross with her.

I have little news to give you since my last letter of not long since and to which you have not replied.

I sent you however some lines to cheer you up. I know that you love literature as being the finest manifestation of human intelligence. And I'll bet you don't cheer up, although you have every reason for doing so, now that you are surrounded by those you love in the midst of all that recalls your sweet infancy, and are respected as you deserve to be. What could I ever offer you in this dirty country, La France, in comparison?—a participation in poverty and labour, which are things not to be shared like good fortune. I am back from Schuffenecker, who is always a good fellow, and who admits to me that I have caused him to make progress. Unfortunately, he is increasingly worried by his wife who, far from being a companion to him, is developing into a real harpy. Strange how marriage succeeds: either it leads to ruin or to suicide. But *Piping-Hot*<sup>1</sup> tones down the truth.

By the way, I have not told you that on more than one occasion I encountered Miss de M . . . tripping along the pavement of the Boulevard des Italiens at about five o'clock in the afternoon. On my life, she was really elegant and her complexion and sparkling eyes, as well as something in her walk said a world of things. Let us think no evil of our neighbour, but there are limits to the freedom that a foreign lady may use in Paris. If a Frenchwoman allowed herself the tenth part in Copenhagen, your excellent Danish women would be less discreet than I am.

After all these matters concern me very little and if I mention them it is because (in spite of me) she used to be one of your best friends.

Kiss the children.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

<sup>1</sup> Title of Zola's novel, *Pot Bouille*.



40.

TO FELIX BRACQUEMOND.

Undated, Paris, about 15 June, 1886

Dear Mr. Bracquemond,

I will come and see you on Wednesday to bid farewell to you and Madame. If Mr. Chapelet<sup>1</sup> can manage it, he will come with me. I leave Paris on Thursday evening to practise art in a corner of Brittany.

Until we meet.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

41.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Pont-Aven, end June, 1886.

Gauguin, Painter,  
c/o Mme. Gloanec,  
Pont-Aven (Finistère).

My dear Mette,

I managed to find the money for my journey to Brittany, and am living here on credit<sup>2</sup>. There are scarcely any French here—all foreigners, 1 Dane, 2 Danish women, Hagborg's brother and a lot of Americans. My painting arouses much discussion, and I must say finds a pretty favourable welcome among the Americans. This is some hope for the *future*. True I make many rough sketches and you would hardly recognise my painting. I hope to pull through this season; and if you can get a little money for the Monet would you send it to me. What a pity we did not take up our abode in Brittany formerly; at the pension we pay 65 francs a month for board and lodging. And one can soon grow fat on the food. There is a house which could be had for 800 francs with stables, coach-

<sup>1</sup> Chapelet, famous ceramist ("an artist equal to the Chinese," Bracquemond said of him) at whose studio Gauguin carried out the finishing of all his ceramic works.

<sup>2</sup> Gauguin once said that misery only had turned his steps towards Brittany. In reality, he learned from the painter Jobbé-Duval, who had stayed at Marie-Jeanne Gloanec's pension at Pont-Aven, since 1860, that living there was very cheap and that, occasionally, Marie-Jeanne might be able to give him credit. In order to be quiet, he lodged in an attic on the second floor.

house, studio and garden. I am sure that a family with 300 francs a month could live very happily.

You imagine we are isolated. Not in the least. There are painters winter and summer, English, American, and others. If later I can obtain a small, but *certain* and continuous sale for my pictures, I will establish myself here the whole year.

In your last letter you spoke of being ill in bed, but you do not say what the illness is. You must not let things slide. But what would you do if you had no roof over your head? Everything is relative in this world, and you should consider yourself happy compared with others. Emil is enjoying himself on holiday, the others are in the country. My little Clovis remains at school during the holidays, and I have not been able to have him home. Let us hope that next winter will be better, in any case it should be less uncertain, I will kill myself rather than live by begging as last winter.

I shall take a little studio near Vaugirard church, where I will work at modelling as Aubé used to do. Bracquemond, who befriends me because of my talent, has put this trade in my way and told me that it may become profitable.

Let us hope that I shall show as much talent in carving as in painting which I shall carry on, however, at the same time. .

Kisses for the children,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

Send me a photo of little Aline if you can get one taken.

42.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Pont-Aven, July, 1886.

My dear Mette,

I received your letter to-day on returning from work, what is this you tell me? that you have a tumour in the breast—truly there is no end to bad luck. In any case, as you have a cousin who is a good doctor, ask him seriously if it is cancer, and above all do not shrink from an operation before it gets worse. Later you will repent having hesitated. I realise it is terrible to be hacked and hewed about, especially for a nature like yours that dreads illness. It is easier to be lulled into false security. If I could be operated on for you, I would gladly suffer it, in spite of all the ill you have

done me and which I shall not forget. In any event, write and keep me informed; I shall now be uneasy all the time I am here.

If you are too unwell to do so, get a friend to send me a few words.

I confess I should prefer to have a photo of little Aline taken alone, as the effect is lost in groups, but just as you like.

I am doing a lot of work here to some purpose; people respect me as the best painter in Pont-Aven<sup>1</sup>; true this does not put a penny in my pocket. But perhaps it is an augury for the future. In any event, it gives me a respectable reputation and everybody here (American, English, Swedish, French) is anxious to have my opinion, which I am foolish enough to give because eventually people make use of us without proper recognition.

I shan't get fat at this trade; I weigh now less than you. I am as thin as a rake, but on the other hand I am feeling better. The more my troubles accumulate, the more my energies are stimulated, without encouraging me. I do not know where I am going, and I am living here on credit. Money worries discourage me utterly and I should much like to see the end of them.

However, we must resign ourselves to it and let come what will, and perhaps one day, when my art has hit everybody in the eye, some Good Samaritan will rescue me from the gutter.

But we must not stir up all this bitterness, and since I am here for three months to recuperate, let us take advantage of the quietude.

Clovis is at boarding school at Antony (Seine). You have no need to write, I hear about him through Schuffenecker who goes to see him, as it is a convenient journey. Is Falstet still at Copenhagen? Kisses for the children and send me your news.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

July, '86.

<sup>1</sup> In this summer of 1886 there were gathered at Pont-Aven, where Gauguin stayed for the first time, Charles Laval, Jourdan, H. Delavallé, then Granchi, Puygodeau, Grouchy-Taylor, Piccolo-Franchi, Sylvain Depeige, Dal Médico, and among American sympathisers, O'Connor. Emile Bernard, carrying a letter of introduction from Schuffenecker, arrived on the 15th August and did not leave Pont-Aven for Paris until the 28th September. Gauguin and Bernard did not see much of each other at this time but nevertheless exchanged ideas. "There is also here" (in the Gloanec pension), wrote Bernard to his parents on the 19th August, "an impressionist named Gauguin, a big fellow of 36, who sketches and paints very well." Gauguin admired Bernard's pictorial daring, whilst the latter recognised the former's talent.

## 43.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Pont-Aven, end September, 1886.

My dear Mette,

I have been expecting a letter from you every day with Aline's photo, which you promised. Naturally, there is always the fear that you are ill with cancer; and if you are ill, you ought to arrange for some one to write to me.

I had news of Clovis the other day; he seems to like his school more and more, comporting himself like an old-timer. I miss him sadly, and if I had the money, I would have brought him here with me. The poor little chap will have had no holiday. but we cannot do what we like in this world.

The evenings at Pont-Aven drag out when one is alone and work is finished<sup>1</sup>. I have no news of Marie and don't even know where she is; thus total silence envelops me; it must be confessed that this is not diverting. The days follow each other so monotonously that I have nothing to tell you that you do not know already.

In a month I shall be back in Paris, unfortunately to look for work. Let us hope that the modelling I hope to do in ceramics will keep Clovis and me.

You are longing for the winter for the lessons to start again and yet you are far from well. As long as you are not ill in bed! It is strange how I am bearing up against all this strain, I have never been so active; when I do fall it will probably be a sudden collapse. After all, it will be no evil and there need be no regrets.

Kisses for all my family.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

## 44.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Pont-Aven, November, 1886.

Dear Mette,

I shall leave for Paris on the 13th of this month, when you will have to write me to 257, rue Lecourbe. Schuffenecker has just

<sup>1</sup> After dinner, Gauguin and his friends would gather in the dining room of the inn and discuss painting until midnight. Marie-Jeanne Gloanec would have to shoo them off to their bedrooms upstairs so that she and her maids could go to bed, their Breton beds being installed in the dining room.

rented me a small hovel there. I have received little Aline's portrait. She seems to be growing like you.

You appear to be putting on flesh, it is obvious you are happy. So much the better.

Emil has written me, he seems content and happy. But, good God, how childish his letters are for his age. I write in haste in the midst of packing up my works. Many studies.

Love and kisses.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

45.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, 26 December, 1886.

My dear Mette,

I have your second letter, this is to say that the first reached me.

But since my arrival in Paris the life I lead is far from gay. I confess I can find nothing to write about. I have been subsisting, God knows how, upon the 350 Frs. from the sale of my little Jongkind. On top of this I have had to pay the boarding school fees for Clovis, who is with me at this moment, without shoes for his feet and without any toy for Christmas. However, one gets used to everything. I have just spent 27 days happily in hospital;<sup>1</sup> unhappily I have come out. Always these damnable colds I catch in winter; I thought this time I was escaping but no! this confounded body of iron collapsed. Can you imagine how cheerfully I spent the long nights in hospital brooding over the solitude which is my environment. I accumulated there so much bitterness that really if you were to come just now (you wanted to see Clovis for an hour or so) I doubt whether I could receive you except spitefully.

You have a home and rye bread almost certainly every day; cherish it. It is a paradise compared with . . .

Ask Schuffenecker what painters think of my painting—probably *nothing*. The man who has nothing is done.

I am engaged in making art pottery.<sup>2</sup> Schuffenecker says they

<sup>1</sup> The name of this hospital is unknown.

<sup>2</sup> The ceramics executed by Gauguin are undoubtedly works of art, but they have had no influence on the evolution of modern ceramics. They are much sought after to-day by collectors and art museums.

are masterpieces and so does the maker, but they are probably too artistic to be sold. However, he says that if this idea could ever be introduced into an exhibition of the industrial arts, it would have an amazing success. I hope the Devil was listening. In the meantime, my wardrobe is in the pawnshop, and I cannot even pay calls.

Yes, I have not seen my sister for a long time. I have been in hospital, and the only time I saw her on my arrival in Paris, she made a scene exclaiming (which she also does from the housetops) that for eight years I have been unwilling to work at anything except my painting. However, Juan<sup>1</sup> needs for a commission and banking agency he is starting, some one who understands banking, who can be relied on not to rob him, and who can take his place during his trips to Europe. Such a clerk cannot be found in Panama; inferior employees get 2,000 francs. Marie has me in mind for such a post.

Enough of the subject, it disgusts me. She has not been able to find time to see Clovis for six months.

And your sister? is she getting married again; I should say now is the time.

Your husband,

PAUL.

Say all nice things to Miss Engelmann, that intelligent young person I like so much. She is just made for living with me. Your self esteem (the Northern vanity) is fed by the proximity of one with an inferiority complex. If you have a few vests to spare, send them to me, I implore you.

46.

TO FELIX BRACQUEMOND. Undated, Paris, January, 1887.

Dear Mr. Bracquemond,

Thanks for all you have done, which must at times have been a nuisance to you. You once very truly said: it is not difficult to practise art, the thing is to sell it!

Let us hope we shall be successful in pottery, but when?

We must talk about Durand-Ruel, his affairs are more complicated than himself.

Kind regards.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

<sup>1</sup> Brother-in-law.

47.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, March, 1887.

My dear Mette,

By a vessel sailing on the 10th of next month I embark for America. I cannot go on any longer living this tedious and enervating life, and I want to put all to the test, in order to have a clear conscience. Will you make arrangements to bring Clovis home?

I will send you shortly a power of attorney to deal with any legacy from my uncle,<sup>1</sup> should he die during my absence.

Why tarry so long without writing me; I should have thought I was entitled to hear from you from time to time. My letters are not very cheerful, but what do you expect, I have had to suffer almost beyond the limits of endurance. Ask Schuffenecker who has seen me at work, whether I deserve all this! Before leaving for the unknown, I should at least like to hear from you if I cannot embrace you. All this time I have been deluded by business which promised a fortune in the future, and is now postponed to the Greek Kalends. There is a suggestion of bringing me into partnership for big business in Madagascar; one day perhaps the clouds will break.

Tenderest love and kisses Write me soon.

PAUL.

48.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Paris, early April, 1887.

My dear Mette,

I awaited your letter with impatience, as I depart from St. Nazaire on the 10th, so you see I have no time to lose. You seem to have misunderstood my letter about Clovis. You have to find *someone* to take charge of him on the journey. I have *just* enough to pay my fare and shall arrive in America penniless. What I shall do there I do not yet know myself. You need no telling that without

<sup>1</sup> Herefore Clovis, brother of Clovis Gauguin, the painter's father, lived at 7, rue Endelle, Orleans. Gauguin spent a great part of his infancy in Uncle Zizi's house.

the sinews of war, things are very difficult but I want above all to flee from Paris, which is a desert for a poor man.

My reputation as an artist grows every day but meanwhile I sometimes go three days without eating, which not only destroys my health but saps my energy. This latter I want to recover, and I am going to Panama where I will live like a native. I know of an islet in the Pacific (Tobago) a league from Panama; it is almost uninhabited, free and fertile. I will take my paints and my brushes and rejuvenate myself far from the haunts of men.

I shall still be suffering from the absence of my family but I shall have cast off this disgusting beggary. Don't worry about my health, the climate is excellent, and one can live on fish and fruit which are to be had for the taking.

Side by side this I am playing with another idea, which may turn out well. Some time ago a splendid business proposition was made to me. Knowing my energy and my intelligence (and particularly my integrity) it was suggested that I proceed to Madagascar for one year as a partner to carry on a business established there. Unfortunately the person they sent there has returned with sufficient fortune and wants to be quit of business. So my sleeping partners, instead of continuing that business, want to do something fresh on a large scale: they have promised to let me know in Panama when they will be ready. The last words they addressed to me were: "Sir, to-day men of your stamp are rare, and we are looking for them no matter where."

Perhaps this proposition will come off, in any case I will ascertain if Juan would like to have a branch in Madagascar. According to all the information I have been able to pick up, one can always make a fortune quickly and live comfortably at the same time. Ask Sophus who has travelled if it is not a good country for business.

It would be an excellent thing for us because Bourbon island is only a three days journey and is now quite civilised with schools, etc. It is more important than Copenhagen . . . I do not think that you would want to rejoin me, but I could see you from time to time while keeping an eye on the business. But all this at present is very much in the air.

At the moment I am somewhat of an invalid and am nursing myself. If you want an idea of the life I have led, ask Schuffenecker, who has helped me a little, he who has so little himself.



And all this wretchedness, deprived of affection, my life broken beyond hope or repair. For you said that you loved me: do you remember your attitude towards me, during the last days we were together? To-day you believe you have changed for the better, and I would fain hope so. If, one day after many trials I succeed (we should have to be reunited), will you bring to the domestic hearth the hell and the discords of yesterday? Is it love that you promise or rather hate, all the bitterness of these last tormented years. I know that you are good at heart, and not ignoble, moreover I put some faith in reason.

You are having Clovis; this child needs love, he will not be able to endure the slight affection you and your family have for him; he is sensitive and intelligent and will say nothing but he will suffer. With affection you will be able to do all you want with him, otherwise you will make him obstinate. If people speak badly of his father he will feel it cruelly. It is a delicate plant that I am confiding to you. I cannot go to see him not having paid his term fees lately; but to-day my heart and mind are steeled against all suffering.

I notice with regret that you are taking morphia, it will get you into a pretty mess, it leads no-where, and deprives you of all moral force. I know it is hard to endure headaches, but it is better to fight against them. Take a little less tea instead of opiates.

When you are inclined, write me to Panama, Juan M. Uribe, to be forwarded.

Meanwhile reply about Clovis by return of post. In my absence Schuffenecker will be my substitute for many things.

If I could only embrace you before I leave.

A kiss for all,

PAUL (who loves you still)

It is foolish, but like that.

49.

TO HIS WIFE

Undated, Paris, early April, 1887.

I have postponed sending this letter, in order to have the power of attorney, for which I have had to wait, when you receive this letter I shall be on the way.

My dear Mette,

You will find enclosed a power of attorney authorising you to act in my name in the event of a legacy. My uncle is very old and has been very poorly this winter. His last letter was harrowing, my situation disturbs him profoundly. If he should die any money you use should be for the children; I think you are too sensible to use it for yourself; little as it may be, it would be a powerful lever to set us on our feet and facilitate our reunion: I cannot, however, at the moment, see any immediate prospect of this; courage again, you will want it to support all your burdens. You have no need to ask me to help you; if I do not do so, it is owing to utter impossibility, and not to vindictiveness. I recall bitterly the words uttered by your brother in tones as patronising as contemptuous. "You cannot live together, and we will do our best to help you." Frankly, when one cannot do anything it is better to keep silence than to make promises. Do you really think that after two years, applying myself diligently, I should not have become capable of giving French lessons?

Your somewhat short letter enables me to divine many things that you do not admit namely, that the affliction of your relatives has not proved a satisfactory substitute for that of your husband, and that you feel as if I were really wicked and had abandoned you for ever. Many would have done so in my place without any compunction since your family fostered the breaking up of our marriage.

To go back to our first topic: I make a bid for fortune with my worldly possessions on my back and nothing in my pocket and I feel keenly my inability to send you any money. All my art pottery remain to be sold and I have left instructions for you to have the proceeds. I hope you will have them soon, and that this will enable you to await my return. I keep back nothing for myself and this I do gladly. You must not reproach me for these two years of neglect: you must remember that since 1873 I have cost your family practically nothing and that these two years are the consequence of a blow from which few could recover.

And what would you say if I became mad like Hermann after losing his fortune: Your sister Ingeborg, the pride of the family, what has happened to her? She has not married again and is not likely to, now.

You yourself have brought back to Denmark your honour

16 PAUL GAUGUIN: LETTERS

infant, you look kinder than the others, and they turn the cold shoulder very soon. I no longer feel any resentment towards you, and you are no longer my enemy in the face, now that you deserve friendship and protection.

I hope we shall be reunited one of these days but I assure you there *must not* then be any of our relatives between us, or, instead of being my enemy towards you I shall become a ferocious beast.

At 11 o'clock I go to school until he is fetched away. Consult Séverin, he will look after my affairs in Paris. I leave Saturday, 10 April.

I love you fondly a thousand times as I love you.

PAUL GAUGUIN

J. N. Uribe, Panama—for M. Gauguin.

50.

TO HIS MOTHER

Undated, Panama, end April, 1887.

My dear Mother,

Here I am in Panama in excellent health as always. The voyage was tough, bad weather and third-class passengers packed like sheep. But a man can put up with this.

I have seen Juan this morning who is the same as ever, except that when Mr. X is not beside him, he is more accessible in money in this (a question of vanity). In 8 days time we shall be on our island (of Tobago), living like savages—and I assure you theirs is not the unhappiest lot.

There is no need to be anxious about employment here. By taking a little trouble one can find work in three days.

When I am quite settled in Tobago and easy in my mind, I will write you at length.

Send me a few lines. How did you find Clovis?

I send you a thousand kisses.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

Your brother was really stupid not to go to St. Thomas; life in the Antilles (Martinique, etc.) is delightfully easy and agreeable.

<sup>1</sup> Gauguin had resolved to leave for Panama, where he reckoned *two* could 'live on nothing' in peaceful labour.

51.

Undated,

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER.

Panama, end April, 1887.

Panama Canal Company,  
Workshops and Transport Dept.  
My dear Schuffenecker,

Here I am settled in the wrong island! With the cutting of the Isthmus life has become impossible even in the most deserted places. The Indians of the hills are not tilling the ground or doing anything, neither will they part with an inch of land. Martinique is a fine country where life is cheap and easy. We ought to have stayed there; we should have been working by now, with half the passage money in our pockets. Nothing is to be got out of my brother-in-law. In short, in all this we have been stupid and unlucky. This won't do at all, we must repair our errors, and I intend (by working on the Canal for two months) to save a little money to take us to Martinique. If Portier has been clever enough to sell something for me, *send me the proceeds quickly* so that I can clear out of here.

I will write you shortly my impressions of the country. Our address :

M. Liesse (Public Works Company) Steamship Agency, Colon.  
(to be forwarded to M. Laval<sup>1</sup>.)

We are both very well in health (Laval<sup>1</sup> always a little frail but I never felt stronger). Despite this, every precaution must be taken, I am told some are swept off in two or three days.

Regards to all who think of me.

Yours, etc.,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

Send any money in bank notes, to avoid loss in exchange.

<sup>1</sup> The painter Charles Laval, his disciple, accompanied Gauguin on this voyage. Admirable artist though he was, he was so strongly influenced by his friend that some of his canvases have had his signature scraped off by unscrupulous dealers and today bear that of Gauguin. His work has thus almost completely disappeared. The Paris Museum of Modern Art has a self portrait of the painter presented by Emile Bernard. Laval died of consumption in 1894.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Panama, early May, 1887.

My dear Mette,

I have many things to tell you, but I can't get them sorted out. Our voyage out was as lousy as it could be, and we are, as they say, in the soup. Devil take all the people who give the wrong information. We called at Guadeloupe and at Martinique, superb country where there is something for an artist to do and where life is cheap and easy and people affable. We ought to have gone there; it would have cost half the fare and we should not have lost time. Unfortunately we went to Panama. My fool of a brother-in-law is there with a shop that looks anything but prosperous; he hardly spent five shillings on our reception, in short, he was as stingy as could be. In a rage, I diddled him out of a 35 franc coat, which was worth 15 second hand. Another annoyance, the cheapest hotel is 15 francs a day, that is 30 francs for the two of us, so we have spent 400 francs without having been able to do anything. These idiots of Colombians, since the cutting of the canal, will not let you have a yard of land at less than 6 francs a yard. It is totally uncultivated and weeds grow everywhere, yet it is impossible to build a hut and live on fruits without people mobbing you as a thief. Just because I pissed in a dirty hole full of broken bottles and fish, they made me walk right across Panama for nearly two hours, escorted by two gendarmes and finally made me pay a piastre. Impossible to refuse. I badly wanted to kick the gendarme, but here justice is summary: they follow you at 5 paces, and if you move they let you have a bullet in the head.

Anyhow the folly was committed; we must repair it. Tomorrow I am going to swing a pickaxe in the isthmus for cutting the canal in return for 150 piastres a month, and when I have saved 150 piastres, that is 600 francs (which will take two months), I will leave for Martinique.

Lazai is differently placed; he can earn fair money for some time painting portraits, which is quite well paid here, 500 francs, as much as one wants (there is no competition), but they must be done in a special way and very badly, a thing I could not do.

Don't grumble about your work. Every day I have to break the earth from half past five in the morning until six in the evening



Pottery by Gauguin (*Private collection*)



under the tropical sun and in the rain. At night devoured by mosquitos.

As to the mortality, it is not so terrible as it is said to be in Europe; among the negroes who do the worst jobs the mortality is 9 in 12, the others only about half.

To go back to Martinique—this would be an enchanting life. If I could only sell in France about 8,000 francs of pictures we, that is, all the family could live as happily as possible and I believe it would be possible even to give lessons. The people are so genial and gay. (True, it is a French colony).

Write me a good long letter.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

M. Liessé (Agent Public Works Company) Steamship Company,  
Colon (For M. Gauguin).

53.

TO HIS WIFE.

Saint-Pierre, 20 June, 1887.,

My dear Mette,

This time I write you from Martinique, where I hope to stay awhile. For a long time I have had bad luck and I cannot do what I want. I worked 15 days for the Company when order came from Paris to suspend much of the work and that same day 90 employees were dismissed, including me, of course, as a newcomer. I packed my traps and came here. Which was not a bad thing. Laval has just had an attack of yellow fever, which I fortunately cut short by homeopathy. So all's well that ends well.

We are at present lodging in a negro hut, and it is a paradise, alongside the Isthmus. Below us is the sea fringed with coco trees, above are all sorts of fruit trees and we are 25 minutes from the town.

Negroes and negresses are milling around all day murmuring their creole songs and perpetually chattering. Don't think it is monotonous, on the contrary it is most varied. I cannot tell you how enthusiastic I am about life in the French colonies and I am



and I shall feel the same. Nature most exuberant, climate wonderful and art is rich. With a little money there is every possibility of being very happy, but a certain amount is necessary. For instance, with thirty thousand francs, one can acquire at this moment a fine piece of land bringing in 8 to 10,000 francs a year and live comfortably the while. The only work is to supervise a few negroes for the purpose of getting out the vegetables which grow without any cultivation.

We have begun to work, and in a short time I hope to send you some interesting pictures. But in a few months' time, we shall be married, and this is the only cloud on the horizon. I am longing for your news and with all these changes I have not yet had time to write.

There is another birthday (7th June) which I spent without a word from anyone.

I can tell you that a white man here has all his work cut out to keep his coat intact, for Potiphar's wives are not wanting. Nearly all are colored from ebony to dusky white and they go as far as to work their claws on the fruit they give you to compel your embraces. The day before yesterday, a young negress of 16 years old, amazingly pretty, offered me a split guava squeezed at the end. I was about to eat it as the young girl left when a yellow fellow, standing by, took the fruit out of my hand and threw it away. "You are European, sir, and don't know the customs of the country," he said to me, "you must not eat fruit without knowing where it comes from. This fruit has been bewitched; the negress crushed it on her breast and you would surely be at her disposal afterwards." I thought it was a joke. Not at all, this mulatto (who had a wonderful record in his examinations) believed in what he said. No! that I am a wizard! I will not fall and you can sleep soundly, assured of my virtue.

I hope to see you here one day with the children, don't be alarmed, there are schools in Martinique and Europeans are treated like other blackbirds.

Write me twice a month.

You cannot say that I have written you a naughty letter. Addressed to M. Victor Dominique, 30, rue Victor Hugo, to be forwarded to M. Gauguin, St. Pierre, Martinique.

54.

TO HIS WIFE

Undated, Saint-Pierre, August, 1887.

My dear Mette,

I have been four months in Martinique and I have had no news of you and of my children. I have anxiously awaited each post and in my present state of health, this silence has brought on a relapse each time. What am I to think? Has anyone been ill? Or rather and most likely have you succumbed to bad advice? In Panama, it was imagined, I had only to stoop down in order to pick up gold by the bucketful, then suddenly, here I am at Martinique—thus a change of scene and the dream fades.

When I wrote you my last letter I was nearly dying, now I am up but I cannot walk any distance.

I am taking all steps here to get repatriated,<sup>1</sup> but do not know when I shall be returning, so it would be no good to write me now, your letter would arrive most likely when I was on the way home. Of all the afflictions you have caused me this silence is the most painful and I shall reach France a prey to fever and suspense. If this is the road you are taking to make up for the hurtful past, you are going the wrong way. Truly, it may be said that with you I shall plumb the depths of vexations.

It were useless to relate all the misery of hunger I have to bear at this moment; it might probably give you pleasure, in the silence wherein you leave me it is permissible to presume anything, especially misfortune. Even if you were ill yourself, you could get someone to write.

Au revoir,

PAUL GAUGUIN

55

TO HIS WIFE

Undated, Saint-Pierre, August, 1887.

My dear Mette,

Do not be too sad when you receive this letter, day by day we have to accustom ourselves more and more to misfortune. It seems that everything has crashed on me since I left Copenhagen, we can

<sup>1</sup> He had the same difficulties later at Tahiti and his request to the local authorities was refused.

## PAUL GAUGUIN'S LETTERS

I am so terribly, terribly broken up I drag myself  
to the post office to drop my letter upon you, unable to write  
more than a few lines. For the first time to-day, all your letters

have come to me. I was reassured by the mailman's  
words. I felt a little strength to hold out on  
the morrow. But when I read of Martine's collapse. In  
fact, I have been down with dysentery and  
I am so weak and exhausted and I can hardly  
get up to go to work. I am so tired that I have  
to go to bed every night, but I have suffered agonies in  
the day. The doctors are at their wits' end and it is  
very dangerous. My last shillings have gone  
to the doctor. He says it is absolutely neces-  
sary that I should have a rest, and I am not to be always ill with  
my face.

My poor wife! how I regret not being dead. This would  
at least have given me pleasure as well as an  
end to my sufferings.

I am so tired that I can hardly hold my head (hatred nerves one) but you  
must not tell the nice story of a husband just when it is  
so painful. And now, Marie worn out by work you ask me to  
be

happy. I am at the moment in a Negro hut, exhausted,  
without a cent of money and without the wherewithal to return  
to France. I am waiting for Schuffenecker to come to the rescue for  
the money he has always done up to now. By this post I have  
sent you some art pottery. It seems to be successful and perhaps,  
I don't know, on my return I may find an opening. If only a little  
business can be done it means a very good livelihood with 15 to  
20 francs a week for my painting. It does not do to count much  
on business to set me on my feet, except by a miracle; I feel  
myself at the end of my rope.

I must end my letter as my head is swarming, and my face is  
covered with perspiration and I have shivers down my back. Good-  
bye for the present, dear wife, I kiss you and I love you (I ought to  
hate you when I look back and see the vile tempers which parted  
us). Since that day everything has gone from bad to worse.

A thousand kisses for the children, shall I ever see them again?

PAUL GAUGUIN

As for Dillies, don't answer them, or if you do, tell them it is I they have to deal with, and that I have gone to work in Panama leaving no address.

56.

IO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER

Martinique, 25/8/1887.

My dear Schuffenecker,

For the first time since I left Paris I have just received mail, all letters from my wife and from Sinbad, letters which have made the round of Panama. I was struck dumb at not having a single letter from you; what has happened in my absence, and is the proverb, the absent are always in the wrong, true?

I cannot understand what has tarnished our friendship. I still recall your words on my departure, telling me to return as quickly as possible—and that is exactly what I want to do but I cannot. Since I wrote you from Martinique one more misfortune has struck me. I have been mortally ill from dysentery, liver trouble and marsh fever—for eight days I rose only to eat and I am just a skeleton. I shall not in fact be any better until I am on the sea and in sight of my native land and if I had the money for the voyage I would leave at the same time as this letter. Laval will remain for some time yet.

You will realize that my illness has swallowed up nearly everything in doctoring and medicine and we are on the brink of absolute penury. It is a great effort to be writing you these lines, as my head has become very weak, I have only a little strength in the intervals between delirium. Nervous crises almost every day and horrible shrieks, it is as if my chest were burning. Laval has received fairly good news from Paris about me. You know that a gentleman called to buy some pots from Chapelet. He was very enthusiastic about them and advertised them extensively in his circle, which should have produced sales. Moreover, I seem to have pleased him immensely; he would be willing, it appears, to put up 20 or 25,000 francs to buy a partnership for me with Chapelet. On these conditions we could do good business and I could count on my modest quota of daily bread. Moreover, there might be splendid results in the future. In these circumstances, it is urgent for me to return.

I implore you (unless something has happened of which I have

no knowledge and which has estranged you) to do all that is possible to send me 250 or 300 francs immediately. Sell 40 of my pictures at 50 francs each, everything I possess, at any price; but I must get out of here, otherwise I shall die like a dog. I am in such a nervous state that all these anxieties prevent my recovery. My legs give way under me.

Go to it, Schuff, one strong pull and I assure you I shall be out of the wood. I have the feeling that ceramics will be my salvation (and I shall have my painting in addition). Best regards to your wife.

Sincerely,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

In any case write me a word of explanation.

57.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER.

Undated, Martinique, September, 1887.

My dear Schuffenecker,

Thanks for your cheering letter which has only one defect, it did not contain the money for my return—my God, how everything has gone wrong on this voyage. I received your letter containing 56 francs almost at the same time, that is, three days before I received your letter dated June. Laval also received several letters including two letters of recommendation from Coticu equivalent to an order to provide good lodgings at Colon with a position in the Canal Company involving not too arduous work so as not to make us ill! These letters reached Colon eight days after our departure; nothing but ill luck.

To tell you frankly my situation here, I am still ill and will never be well in this climate, the arrival of every post brings on a relapse due to emotional shock. In spite of this I am limping along in an effort to make up for lost time and to make some good pictures. I shall bring back a dozen canvases, four of them with figures far superior to my Pont-Aven period.

Until the arrival of the 250 francs I have the 56 francs which you sent me, for the two of us to live on, i.e., for a month to a month and a half, for I cannot take the boat until 15 days after the arrival of that which brings letters.

You can realise our sufferings and how little strength the amount of food we can buy gives to a sick man anxious to get well again.

On top of all this I have had no letter from my wife since I have been here while I have written her two letters, including one telling her about my illness. What is happening to her? I suffer from insomnia every night because of this anxiety. If my wife should die at this moment I should be in a pickle about the children. At all costs I must return to France and I have no other means of travelling than the steamboat, which does not give credit.

You must be returning from your holidays with many good studies; I am sure that the opposition from J. P. Laurens will have put you in good spirits. However, you have only to sit tight. In spite of my physical weakness I have never done a painting so clear, so lucid (with plenty of imagination thrown in).

Do not be surprised if Lunès is pro-Pissarro, he is his cousin, we chatted together at the last exhibition, Pissarro, he and I; so he knows me well, but Pissarro did not trouble to speak well of me to him. When you see Sinbad the Sailor tell him that he lacks the finer sensibilities; he wrote telling me that if I go under it is my fault, and he does not know whether he would laugh or cry at my fate; that he is working modestly without asking anything of anybody (*a lie to start with*).

With most cordial greetings and love to the children.<sup>1</sup>

PAUL GAUGUIN.

58.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, 24//11/87.

Dear Mette,

It is possible that you do not realize how harmful your silence can be and that you find it quite natural not to have requested my address from Schuffenecker. Since you left Paris you have given no sign of life; Schuffenecker thinks you are cross with him because he scolded you a little when you called on him. And yet, who has been a true friend since our crash? However, whatever that may be, I

<sup>1</sup> Miss Schuffenecker and her brother.

am delighted to have your news; to know that you are alive and that the children are well.

I reached France somehow on a sailing boat<sup>1</sup> and the sea air has strengthened me a little although my internal pains are still unbearable.

Arriving in the middle of winter in the snow, I find the change of climate a little hard. Fortunately for me Schuffenecker boards<sup>2</sup> and lodges me during the convalescence I so sorely need. Business in Paris goes from bad to worse; everybody regards war as the sole means of extrication. It will have to come some day, and then there will be plenty of vacancies, which will be very convenient for some of us.

I do not know why, but in your letters there is always some mental reservation on my account. You seem to think that if I am not earning money it is because I do not choose to do so and that I make no effort to get on my feet. If I came out of prison I should find a situation more easily; what would you? I cannot get myself sentenced in order to interest the world in my fate. The duty of an artist is to work in order to become strong; this duty I have fulfilled and all I have brought back from the tropics arouses nothing but admiration. Nevertheless, I do not arrive.

On my return a proposition was put to me by one of my admirers who bought pottery from me. The idea was to enter into partnership with M. Chapelet, which would have put me in the way of a livelihood and perhaps have created a position in the future for us all and in a sphere (the artistic sphere) which I understand very well. At this moment M. Chapelet chooses to retire and live on his savings! Yet another thing that slips through my fingers.

I must find a situation where the work is sufficiently remunerative to support life and to enable me to help you a little, as, for example, the pottery moulding with Bouillot, but nothing can be had from this quarter at present.

There are many things I cannot find here, including 2 frames

<sup>1</sup> Remembering his engagement as a pilot on the *Luzzitana* Gauguin worked his passage as a member of the crew.

<sup>2</sup> On his return Gauguin lodged with Schuffenecker, who then lived in a summer-house 29 rue Boulevard. But Gauguin's dictatorial character and his habit of making himself at home everywhere, provoked violent scenes with his host and which culminated with the artist's departure, without, however rupturing the old friendship with the excellent "Schuff."

and a picture "*Snow Scene*." Tell me exactly what you took away, merely to satisfy me that I have not been robbed. Also send me the Manet unless you are able to sell it in Denmark—I will try to sell it here.

Have you heard from Marie since she left for Germany?

Write me a long detailed letter and keep up your courage. We both have need of it.

A thousand kisses for the children, and my love.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

59.

TO HIS WIFE.<sup>1</sup>

Paris, 6 12, 87.

Dear Mette,

Since my return there has been no great change in my affairs except that in a month's time I hope to have work in ceramics. If so, I shall earn enough to be able to send you a little, and if I have not done so up to the present it is because it has been flatly impossible.

And to tell the truth, when I left Copenhagen, I had reason to believe that you would be helped. Your brother maintained that I was in the way and I being absent, the family would be able to provide for you. Louise Heegaard also said that you should wait for nothing so long as she was there. Which shows the gulf between speech and action.

To go back to the point, I believe that in a few days' time I shall be able to earn stated sums. I don't want you to lose courage, and I send you 100 francs which I have at this moment, not in excess of my wants, but which I do not actually need for the present, because Schuffenecker does not press for what I owe him, and he feeds me. I have sold a pot to a sculptor for 150 francs.

My health is not too good. I have put on weight, but from morning to night I have these unbearable internal pains and I have neither the time, the place, nor the money for proper attention. Besides what is physical torment compared with mental torment, and from this point of view your existence for three years has been

<sup>1</sup> Accompanying this letter.



a picture compared with mine. Although it may be difficult, it is not impossible that one day I shall be in the position *that I deserve*. To my regret, you return and will your advisers, who are such bad payers, tell you that your place is not by your husband's side.

What may be expected, no one will hit on anything better than *the old form*, and for that a head cannot be dispensed with: I want a head to be the wife, but she should have all responsibility for the work of feeding the family.

You live in the Arm of Goupil, publisher and picture dealer; to-day this place has become an impressionist stronghold. We are gradually being accepted and absorbed by his customers; here is one hope. Moreover, I feel convinced that before very long I shall get going. Still, the Manet so that I can set about selling it.

In the collection of articles which you took away, I do not know what you mean by green trees; is it a fairly big canvas with the village of Pont-Aven in the background in bright sunshine and a little cult on the right?

Tell me, too, if you took away the poems of Francis Coppé, and John Keats's *ballad on London*. I merely ask the question because I missed them in the removal, and not to scold you for carrying them off. If you have also taken away a pot which I made, take the other one of it for me. I will have it back again unless you are able to sell it at a good price (would be 100 francs). I cannot find my old state of service, what has become of it?

Read my letter attentively and answer me point by point.

If you see your relative the *great doctor* tell him my symptoms. Full-blown cholera's temperament. I have had dysentery and liver trouble; I have eating and two hours after, I have internal pains which I mistake for flatulence. As I haven't the money to consult a doctor, I should like your relative if possible to advise me what course to adopt, hygienic measures in preference to medicine.

Now that I have finished my business, let us embrace and not abandon hope of an improvement in our position. My poor dear

<sup>1</sup> Flora Tristan, born in Paris the 7th April 1803, daughter of a noble Spanish-Portuguese, Don Mariano de Tristan, and of a young Frenchwoman, Thérèse Laroche. Journalist and novelist, apostle of feminism and revolution for so long, she led a most exciting life until her premature death in his decay on the 14th November, 1844. Her chief works are: *Wandering of a Parisian Mephisto*, *Labour Union*. The book to which Gauguin referred is *London Wards* Delloye, publisher. 1840.

Mette, I am very much afraid that after all these efforts and sufferings the financial situation is not healthy; I am very much afraid that we are no better off than when we started. I was delighted to see you in April, but could not fail to notice in you the same characteristics which would make our life together so difficult—the same rebellious instincts, stronger than ever, the same leaning to flattery rather than to truth. To cultivate pride and repel truth is the peculiarity of the small minded and mentally deficient.

Love and kisses,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

P.S. Does there happen to be an old Danish author whom you could translate into French. Laval's brother, who is a writer would correct the grammar, perhaps you could earn more money this way.

60.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Paris, February, 1888.

Dear Mette,

Your last letter said you were writing to-morrow! which is why I waited day after day before writing you. Since my return I have bestirred myself to find money and it is by no means easy. However I do foresee a better future now that I am beginning to be more favourably known in my art.

To come right to the point. Last Sunday some one at Goupil's was most enthusiastic about my pictures and eventually bought three of them for 900 francs and intends (he says) to take others from me.

My art pottery has also been shown to connoisseurs. Of course I have pressing debts, Clovis's boarding-school fees amounting to 250 francs among others. So you must pardon me if I do not send you more at this moment. On the eve of being launched I must make a supreme effort for my painting and I am going to Pont-Aven in Brittany for 6 months to paint.

I beg of you not to throw the handle after the axe but to strain every nerve to hold on for another year.

If Falstett is still in Copenhagen try to see him to ascertain if

Paris, 1888. I am writing the impressionists to exhibit in Sweden at the Salon.

You are visiting Brussels, probably, also to Glasgow. I would be glad to see you. I intend to hold several exhibitions during the year. You must understand that my interest is yours and you must be prepared for the fact that painting is a 'trade off' for the Salon of Fine Arts.

I hope to see you, but you do not believe in me unless I am seen to be successful. This is an opinion that must be accepted from the public. I have realised that this clumsy painting has been your ruin but in the future if it is done you should accept the position and try to derive profit therefrom for the future.

The notion of making Emil a naval officer has knocked me flat. I will not mention it to my uncle, who, like me, would be dead against the idea. In the first place he could only be an officer in the French Service, where special training is required, which would probably differ from that given in Denmark. And I hardly imagine my uncle would make him a naturalised Dane!

I am opposed to the idea on principle, and I will write you more fully on this matter later. I must stop writing now, the reins are slipping, and my head is swimming.

PAUL GAUGUIN

My congratulations go to Mad. Brandins. I did not know the marriage had taken place. You were quite right not to let the title net go for 40 francs, as I would not part with it here for less than 80 francs.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, February, 1888.

Dear Mette,

I leave on Thursday for Pont-Aven, and I would like to answer your letter now that I am quiet. The country in winter is apparently not altogether favourable to my health, but I must work 7 or 8 months at a stretch, absorbing the character of the people and the country, which is essential for good painting. On this question, I see from your letter that you raise an impregnable wall, as competently as any purse-proud Philistine. There are two classes

in society, one which has inherited wealth, enabling the individual member to live on his dividends, to buy a partnership or start in business on his own. The other class inheriting no wealth is to live on what? On the fruits of its toil. With some, prolonged assiduity in business or management brings in a more or less modest reward. With others the creative impulse (in the arts or literature) takes longer, it is true, to establish an independent and lucrative position. In what way do children suffer whose father is an artist and not an employee? Where are the employees who do not suffer financially, at least for a time?

And who form the finest part of the nation, living, fructifying, stimulating progress, enriching the country? The artists! You do not like art; what then do you like? Money? And when the artist is earning, you are with him. There is profit and loss in the game, and you ought not to share in the joy if you refuse to share in the pain. Why do you educate your children, since that is an immediate labour in view of an uncertain future? This brings me to Emil's case. Why an officer in the engineers? It is exactly the same thing as a naval officer, and the same question, to which you do not reply, remains to be answered.

Is he to be French or Danish? He should be, like his brothers, French. Moreover, the course he would take for the corps of engineers is the same as for an ordinary engineer. Once a qualified engineer I should be able, with the contacts I have, to put him in the way of earning an independent living. The more we progress the greater is the place which machinery will occupy in our lives and there will always be work for engineers.

Among the drawings you have sent me by the children, that of Aline's is the best, provided of course that she did it herself. I do not see why you should not encourage her along these lines. But no teacher! If she has the taste for it, let her copy what is in the house and after that let her make sketches from nature.

Your notion of seeing me at a watering-place in Denmark hardly amuses me from any point of view (1) The fare alone would keep me for three months in Brittany; (2) The work I should do in such a place, disturbed by the children, would not be as good as that which I should do here. Besides I have no summer clothes, which, in a bourgeois country, is a calamity; (3) Far apart from each other we find it almost impossible to reach a tolerable understanding, but down there it would be a repetition of the old boredom,

quartz, etc. And what would your family say? Think of it, you might have another child! (4) And the last reason. Since my departure, in order to conserve my moral energy, I have gradually suppressed my emotions. That side of my nature is absolutely dormant, and it would be dangerous for me to have my children by my side, only to have of them after a short time. I must remember that the natures dwell within me: the Indian and the sensitive man. The sensitive being has disappeared and the Indian remains sufficient for me.

A long article recently appeared in the *Figaro* on the little revolution which took place in Norway and Sweden. Bjornson and Conrady have just published a book in which they claim for a woman the right to sleep with whomsoever she pleases. Marriage is suppressed and there is no more than an association. Have you read it? What do they say about it in Denmark? See whether the book is translated into French: if not, you could not do better than translate it and send your translation to me, I would have it corrected and published. We might be able to squeeze an honest penny out of it.

Send me two or three flannel vests, I am without any, and this troubles me in the winter.

Love and kisses to all.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

c/o M. A. Clouez, Pont-Aven (Finistere).

TO HIS WIFE.

Pont-Aven, March, 1888.

Dear Mette,

I have just received the vests which you have sent me; thanks, they will do very well and I was badly wanting them. Since I have been here I have been in bed nearly all the time, I ought to have submitted to blistering for my liver trouble. I cannot get rid of all the bile that accumulates.

You tell me that you find it very difficult to write in your present state of mind. I understand it must be irksome for you to discuss things with me. Let me simplify matters. Send me about every three weeks one line: *The children and I are well.*

A new remedy has just been discovered for headaches, anti-pirine; this works a speedy cure, and you ought to use it. You bewail your solitary lot (and don't let me forget it either). I do not see it at all; you have the children near you, your compatriots, your sisters and your brothers, your house. What about me who am alone in a tavern bedroom from morning to night in absolute solitude. Not a soul with whom to exchange a thought. Assuming we could live as formerly you would be complaining at the end of eight days—but we are not doing so. I hope to be able to help you substantially in a year and I shall do so as soon as possible. But I see no prospect of resuming life in common after seven or eight years.

Let us hope that then I shall find in my children some compensation for my domestic disappointments. We two, being then old, may be able to understand each other better. Courage and patience.

Kiss the children for me.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

63.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER. Pont-Aven, 26 March, 1888.

My dear Schuff,

Thanks for the 50 francs you have sent me; although this does not solve the problem, I am a trifle easier at present.

For some days all trace of illness has disappeared, and I hope soon to be recovered. But good God, how melancholy everything is at the moment! No snow, but rain and hail. Impossible to work outdoors or within, as I cannot make use of models. Have you Huysmans' *Modern Art*?<sup>1</sup>

I have received an invitation to Sinbad's marriage. What would you? the poor fellow cannot keep afloat without a partnership and his marriage will bring him a little cash. All folly is excusable if pitiable.

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Art*, by J. K. Huysmans, is a collection of articles, and was published in 1883.

I have received an article by Feneon,<sup>1</sup> *Revue Independante* January. Possible as regards the artist, curious about his character. It seems that these gentlemen had to suffer like me and were little and a sorry story is written.

Regards to everybody.

PAUL GAUGUIN

64

TO HIS WIFE

Post-Office About 15 June 1888

My dear Mette

I have not written for a long time but the summer heat, like last year, has debilitated me. The hot weather has brought on the fever again, which has affected my head. I am in such a feverish state that I shrink each day from the moment of writing dreading to give you this news which would no doubt cause you to forget my affairs.

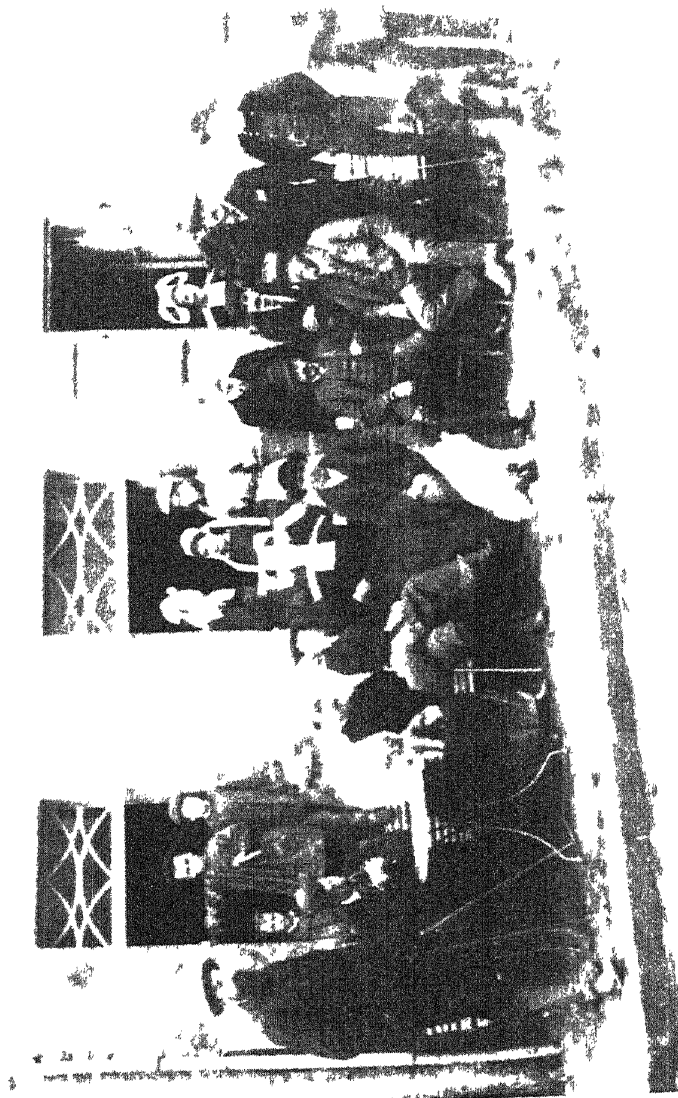
You blame me for letting a long time go by without replying to you. Reply to what? Your letters are as they used to be in our life together, anything but an exchange of ideas and emotions and I am beginning to be tired of writing without knowing how my letter will be taken. It happened to please you to join me<sup>2</sup> in the month of April, '87, and after I felt you wrote me a warm letter. I will never believe that this letter was selfish. When I tried to make good in Panama your rare letters became icy and somebody who recently saw one (they can be shown like business letters without indication) said to me on seeing how they end "We beg to remain yours faithfully."

You ask me to give you courage. What do you need it for except for encouragement in material matters. Are you shut up within the four walls of a tavern, are you deprived of a mother, of the sight of your children, of their chatter? What you mean is that if you had dividends coming in you would be the happiest of women.

<sup>1</sup> Ferns Léon died in 1944. Agent for a big picture de l'école there and at that time Feneon was one of the most intelligent critics of art at the end of the 19th century. He was one of the first to defend the Impressionists.

<sup>2</sup> None of the biographies of Gauguin mention this meeting.

St. Albans, Vermont, 1888



A group of patients outside Pension Grille at Pont Aven 1888  
(Private collection)





Nobody to thwart your wishes, overwhelmed with attentions, spoilt, even courted.

Now and then I receive letters from people reputed to be intelligent, full of *sympathy, of admiration* for me, etc.

I was 40 on the 7th June and I have not yet received the tenth part of such birthday wishes from my family. When your son comes of age will you dare advise him to marry any one except a cook? Should he marry a lady she will have nothing to say to him outside conventional topics. Apart from twaddle, dress, tittle-tattle about neighbours, no conversation. If the son is more intelligent than his wife, he will get himself disliked. Only a cook will be proud of her husband, respect him and find it quite natural for the husband to paddle the canoe.

As you easily forget what you say and what you write, I send you a copy of your letter. See what it contains. Leaving out the news of the children, you can see how affectionate it is! Yet you demand affection from me and offer no return.

Copenhagen, 4 June

My dear Paul,

Although I am not sure that you are still at Pont-Aven, so long is it since I heard from you, I write you all the same as I want you to receive this on your birthday. You will see that we think of you here.

So the summer and the heat have come at last. Which means for me the season when I have nothing to do and when I earn nothing. Fortunately the children are invited to spend their holidays at the seaside. Clovis urgently needs this while it will do the others good. As for me I shall spend the summer no matter where or how so long as I spend nothing. But I have no intention of weeping. You seem to be bothering so little about what happens to us. I wrote you six weeks ago and you have not replied to me. Your last letters have been so little affectionate that I really don't know what to believe. Certainly you do nothing to give me a little courage and you ought not to find this very difficult. Anyhow, recriminations are useless, the object of this letter is only to say that I am far from forgetting you. Which may perhaps be all the same to you! The children are all well and are nice and well-behaved. Emil grows quieter and more reasonable. He is just back from

spending his Whitsun holidays with his grandmother, and was very well-behaved.

Write me soon. I worry a lot about you.

Your wife,

METTE.

Thanks, I get along so, so. Until further order I am at Pont-Aven. In any case, I could not go away, as I owe two months board and lodging.

Your husband,

PAUL.

65.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER.

Pont-Aven, June, 1888.

My Dear Schuffenecker,

I am very late in answering you; as we get older, we get lazier and this state of despairing suspense is exceedingly enervating. However, it is a consolation to feel that friends do not forget you.

The Durand-Ruel exhibition did not surprise me; he is pushing the goods at the back of the shop for all he is worth and if he can right himself it will always be a gain. Nor am I vexed that the Claude Morets are becoming dear; anyhow it will be one more example for the speculator who compares former prices with those of to-day. And from this point of view, it is not excessive to ask 400 francs for a Gauguin in comparison with 3,000 for a Moret.

Your neighbour<sup>1</sup> ought to be proud of his medal and his medallion prize fits him like a glove! And chaffed by those who have no model as well as by us fellows he can give himself airs—don't fret about all this, he laughs loudest who laughs last. Meanwhile times are hard.

I have written Van Gogh, I am always hoping he will be able to ease things for me. The Cézanne you ask of me is a pearl of great price, for which I have already refused 300 francs; I guard it as the apple of my eye and short of absolute necessity I will part with

<sup>1</sup> The painter Jérémi Quignon nicknamed at the time "the painter of black wheat."

it only after my last shirt; besides who is the fool who would pay that; you give no clue as to his identity.

With affectionate regards to everybody.

PAUL GAUGUIN

66.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER

Pont-Aven 8 July, 1888.

My dear Schuffenecker,

Thanks for your cheery letter. You cannot expect to please everybody, even Miss Pouzin.<sup>2</sup> Set your mind at rest on this point. It is not the good artists who can injure you, but the bad ones. If satellites follow in the wake of a planet, the latter in its turn pulls them along in its movement.

I replied to Van Gogh<sup>3</sup> that I accepted his proposal, relying on Miss Pouzin to release me here so that I could slip away to the South. I have not heard from him, which surprises me, and have had bad news from Miss Pouzin, which is unpromising all round—a sign that good will come. You see how very optimistic I am.

I have relapses from time to time, which drive me back to bed, but on the whole I am on the road to recovery and I have got my strength back. Also I have done some *nudes* which ought to please you. And not at all in the Degas<sup>4</sup> style. The last is a fight between two boys near the river, quite Japanese, by a Peruvian Indian. Very little finished, the lawn green and upper part white.

<sup>1</sup> The fool was Schuffenecker who wanted to buy this Cézanne picture, one of Gauguin's impressionist collection, so as to render his friend a service.

<sup>2</sup> Miss Pouzin, married to a banker, was studying painting under Schuffenecker's tuition.

<sup>3</sup> Vincent Van Gogh, born 30th March, 1853, at Groot-Zundert in Holland. He had known Gauguin during the severe winter of 1886 and much admired his talent. Staying at Arles in 1886, and knowing his friend's poverty, he insisted on the latter joining him in order to found the Studio of the South. Gauguin arrived at Vincent's lodgings 2, place Lamartine, about the 20th October.

<sup>4</sup> Edgar Degas (1834-1917). He held Gauguin in great esteem and defended him when the painter exhibited his first Tahiti canvases.

100 PAUL GAUGUIN: LETTERS

I am delighted to see that you have been able to resume work on your health.

With regards, etc.,

PAUL GO.

67.

TO EMILE SCHUFFLENECKER. Pont-Aven, 14 August, 1888

My dear Schuff,

Thanks for having thought of me in sending your address, when I wished in order to write. You are now in your element since you need dispute as struggle to encourage you. A hint—don't paint too much direct from nature. Art is an abstraction! study nature then freed on it and treasure the creation which will result, which is the only way to ascend towards God—to create like our Divine Master.

Here is something as you like little dots. All the Americans have been raging against the impressionist, and I was forced to threaten to dot them on the crumple, and now we have peace.

I may leave at any moment. I have started a pupil who will go far: the circle grows. Little Bernard is here<sup>1</sup> and has brought some interesting things from St. Briac. Here is someone who is not afraid to try anything.

My last works are on the right lines and I think you will find a new note, or rather the affirmation of my recent experiments or synthesis of one form and one colour, without either being the dominant. Courage then, and may God take you in his holy keeping by crowning your efforts.

<sup>1</sup>Emile Bernard (1869-1942). A precocious child, talented for drawing and painting, he was in the advance guard of modern painting, and certain canvases of 1886 and 1887, such as *My parents' house at Asnières*, and the *Head of a Man* of the Marcel Guerin collection, dating even before the decisive meeting with Gauguin, are of extraordinary boldness. He stayed in August and September at Pont-Aven with his sister Madeleine and his mother and, with Gauguin, created synthetism. The firm friendship which united them was ruptured in 1891 in consequence of numerous disagreements of which the chief was Gauguin's consecration as the chief of pictorial symbolism, while Bernard considered he was the initiator of his friend in the development of his art.

Are all of your family with you? if yes, give regards and child-like kisses.

*Frater salutem.*

PAUL GAUGUIN

Herewith a photograph done by an amateur artist.

68.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

Pont-Aven, October, 1888.

My dear Emile,

Thanks for your letter which is interesting for a few points of view. (1) That of the expansiveness which belongs to your age. There is time enough, to arrive, like me, at the stage when the heart is hardened (I only keep from joy or enthusiasm). (2) That of the second period which you are reaching (Lilies of Art) with an execution obviously necessary as a stepping-stone, but not for the final aim, ceases to count. You hold all the trumps in your hand. With foot in stirrup beltimes, you will arrive fully armed and in all the vigour of youth at the moment when the blocked road has been cleared in great part. You are extraordinarily gifted, and painting now, you will undoubtedly arrive, but at some other time, say ten years ago, you would not have found one person to admire you or look at you. So much the better for you.

In this connection Van Coch<sup>1</sup> has written a very curious thing to Vincent. I have, he says, seen Seurat<sup>2</sup> who has made some admirable studies representing a good workman tushing his titbit: Signac<sup>3</sup> is always rather cold: he seems to me like a traveller in little dots. They are to start a campaign (having the Independent Review as the chief organ of their propaganda) against us fellows.

<sup>1</sup> Theo Van Gogh, born in 1857, brother of Vincent Van Gogh. Manager of Goupil's gallery, rue Montmartre, he did yeoman service for the impressionists.

<sup>2</sup> George Seurat, born 2nd December, 1859, died 20th March, 1891. Creator of divisionism or pointillism, regarded as one of the fathers of cubism.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Signac, painter (1863-1935), friend and disciple of Seurat one of the founders of the Independent Gallery.

Degas (Cézanne especially) Bernard, etc., would be made out to be worse than devils to be kept at arm's length like the plague. Behold *gratia nolla* what was said. You can take it for granted but say nothing about it to Van Gogh, otherwise you will make me out to be mercenary. I am more than pleased with the result of my Pont-Aven studies. Degas is buying from me that of the two Breton women at Arles. It is a handsome compliment to me: as you know I have the greatest confidence in Degas's judgment—besides, it is an excellent thing to do commercially. All Degas's friends have confidence in him. Van Gogh hopes to sell all my pictures. If I have this luck I shall go to Martinique, I am positive that now I can do good work there. And if I can get hold of a substantial sum I will buy a house there and set up a studio where friends will find the wherewithal for life all to hand for almost nothing. I am inclined to agree with Vincent, the future is to the painters of the tropics, which have not yet been painted. (Novelty is essential to stimulate the stupid buying public) In any case if you do not have to go on military service you can come here without fear. I have now so arranged matters that three can live very cheaply, and if your father stopped your allowance and you had nothing, you would find here an assured existence.

I have a commission for you. Ask Van Gogh to let you have the proceeds of the first picture of mine which he sells, and send me the following colours which I need. I do not like Vincent's colours, I prefer Tanguy's.<sup>1</sup>

Although silence is to be my part henceforth, do not forbid me to send my respects to Madame Bernard with all my good wishes for your charming sister.

Yours cordially,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

<sup>1</sup> Julien Tanguy (1825-1894), once a plasterer, "father Tanguy," who supplied colours to artists, set up as a picture dealer at 14, Rue Clauzel, Paris, and his little shop became a meeting place for Van Gogh, Gauguin, Emile Bernard, Laurence, Pissarro and others. He was a great admirer of Cézanne. In 1890 he was the first to exhibit. Kind of heart and helped by "Mother Tanguy," he rendered great services to artists. When he died, Octave Mirbeau organised a sale at the Hotel Drouot for his widow's benefit.

69.

TO MADELEINE BERNARD.

Pont-Aven, October, 1888.

Dear Sister,

If you want to go through life like most young girls, without aim, without reason, at the mercy of all the hazards of fortune good and bad, dependent on the world to which we sacrifice our all and which renders us so little in return, do not read what I am writing to you.

If, on the other hand you want to *be something*, to find happiness solely in your independence and your conscience, it is now time to think about these things and in three years to act.

First of all, you must regard yourself as Androgynæ, without sex. By that I mean that heart and soul, in short all that is divine, must not be the slave of matter, that is of the body. The virtues of a woman are exactly the same as the virtues of a man and are the Christian virtues—duty towards one's fellows based on kindness, and always sacrifice, with conscience only for judge. You may raise an altar to your dignity and intelligence, but none other.

Lying and venality are vices, and, in the ordinary course of events, both men and women are addicted to them. All chains are the insignia of the lower orders, and if you do any slavish action, you flout divine laws. Do in a proud spirit all that would help you to win the right to be proud, and do your best to earn your own living, which is the pathway to that right. But crush all vanity, which is the hallmark of mediocrity, and, above all, the vanity of money.

When one day the puppet shall have given place to a living creature, all worth-while people will be found ready to support you. Do not be afraid. If you are in need of help, turn to us and say: "Brother, support me!" We artists also are in need of your defence, of your aid, and you can be persuasive. We should thus render each other mutual service—bring about an exchange of different qualities.

<sup>1</sup> Madeleine Bernard (1871-1895), of an exquisite and passionate nature, suffered much about her sixteenth year from her relatives' failure to understand her brother and herself. She was forbidden to correspond with Gauguin. Betrothed to Charles Lavié, she died young at Cairo from consumption. In 1888, at Pont-Aven, Gauguin had been very much enamoured of Madeleine Bernard, whom he always called "Dear Sister."



I hope that both of you, mother and daughter, arrived safely and in good health. Be my mediator with your mother, and accept a fraternal kiss from your elder brother.

PAUL GAUGUIN

Arles, 2, Place Lamartine, from 22 October.

70.

TO HIS WIFE

Pont-Aven, October, 1888.

My dear Mite

I am a little troubled about the children's health. It is their holidays and down there as here, sun-bathing is unwise at this season. And what has been happening to you all this time? Your silence is significant.

I have now recovered from my illness and am beginning to work. In a few days I shall leave for Arles near Marseilles. I have been asked to spend 6 months more with a painter who will board and let me have exchange for drawings.

If I had had the money to settle my bill at Pont-Aven, I should have gone already. In any case write to Pont-Aven until further notice. I shall send a photograph taken here by an amateur. I hope you will show it to the children so that they do not completely forget what their father looks like.

The Commission of Fisheries ought to be keeping people in town this season and I hope the dead season will be of short duration.

Loual has returned from Martinique and is here for the present. He sends you his regards.

I embrace everybody

PAUL

71.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER. Quimperlé, 8 October, 1888.

My dear Schuff,

You are back in Paris ready to slip into harness again. I should like very much to see your pictures—return from the sea—I am sure they must be interesting.

I received your last letter and the next day one from Paris. Since then I have been confined to bed, with a return of that dreadful dysentery. Worry causes the bile to accumulate in the stomach and tortures me, then comes the moment of exaltation. But I am up and about again.

I have painted a picture<sup>1</sup> for a church; of course it was refused, so I am sending it to Van Gogh. Unnecessary to describe it, you will see it.

This year I have sacrificed all, execution and collecting, for style, intending to compel myself to do something different from what I usually do. It is a transformation which has not borne fruit so far, but will, I think, bear it.

I have done a self-portrait for Vincent, and for me for it. I believe it is one of my best efforts: absolutely incomprehensible (upon my word) so abstract is it. First the head of a king, a Jean Valjean (*les Misérables*), likewise personifying a respectable impressionist painter burdened for ever with a chain for the world. The drawing is altogether peculiar, being complete abstraction. The eyes, the mouth, the nose, are like the flowers of a Persian carpet, thus personifying the symbolical side. The colour is a colour remote from nature; imagine a confused collection of pottery all twisted by the furnace! All the reds and violets streaked by flames, like a furnace burning fiercely, the seat of the painter's mental struggles. The whole on a chrome background sprinkled with childish nosegays. Chamber of pure young girl. The impressionist is such an one, not yet stifled by the filthy kiss of the Fine-Arts (School).

I send you a letter from Vincent, to let you see where I am with him and what is on foot at the moment. Show it to Miss Pouzin, so that she sees you are not alone in holding me in esteem. It will also serve to impress upon her that artists are beings apart who cannot be bothered with the practical business ideas mooted by her.

Van Gogh has just bought from me 300 francs work of pottery. So I leave at the end of the month for Arles, where I expect to stay

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to *Vision after the Sermon, or Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*, a first attempt at simplification which Gauguin, assisted by Laval and Bernard, carried to Nizon, near Pont-Aven, in order to offer it to the church of the little village. But the cure, startled and guessing that his flock would not understand this work, refused the gift.

a long one. The object of this sojourn is to free me from money worries, so that I can concentrate on my work until I can be launched.

Hereafter he will send me a small monthly sum for my living expenses. Do not forget me during my absence. I will write to you and think of you.

Kind regards to every body

Yours ever,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

72.

CLIP FROM VAN COGH attached to GAUGUIN'S letter to SCHUTTENACKER.

My dear Gauguin,

This morning I received your excellent letter, which, however, I have sent to my brother: your general idea of the impressionist, of which your portrait is the symbol, is striking. I am more than anxious to see it, but I feel pretty sure that this work is too important for me to have it by way of exchange. If you care to keep it for us, my brother will take it from you, which I lost no time in asking him to do at the first opportunity, which, let us hope, will be soon.

For we want to urge you once more to see whether you cannot come.

I must tell you that even whilst at work I do not cease thinking of this enterprise of starting a studio with you and me for permanent residents, but both of us desiring to make it a shelter and a refuge for the comrades when they are knocked out in the struggle. After you left Paris my brother and I spent some time together which will ever remain memorable. The discussions took an ever wider sweep—with Guillaumin, with Pissarro father and son, with Seurat, whom I did not know (I only visited his studio a few hours before my departure).

In these discussions what frequently cropped up was what my brother and I have so much at heart, namely what steps can be taken to safeguard the material existence of painters and to safeguard their means of production (colours, canvases) and secure to

them a direct share in the price their pictures may fetch at any time after they have parted with them.

When you come here we shall be able to go over all this ground again.

However that may be when I left Paris yesterday I was pretty ill, and almost drunk owing to the necessity of maintaining my waning strength, then I crept back into my bed, and I truly dared to hope. But hope is once more dawning on the horizon, this delusive hope which has so often consoled me in my solitary life. And now I want you to take a full share in this confident belief that we are on the way to a lasting success.

When you arrive we can indulge in day-long discussions in the poor studios and the cafés of the little boulevard, and you will realize what my brother and I are doing at which is not by any means the formation of a company.

Nevertheless, you will see that what is done in the future to remedy the desperate state of these last years, will be very much what we have advised. As soon as we have the whole idea worked out on and based on unshakeable foundations you shall have all details. And you will have to admit that we shall then be going beyond the plan which we have already outlined to you. If we have gone further it is only our duty as picture dealers. As you perhaps know, I, too, spent years in the business and do not despise a trade by which I earned my daily bread.

It is enough to say that I do not believe that in physically cutting yourself off from Paris, you will cease to feel in direct contact with it.

I have an extraordinary fever for work these days, actually I am struggling with a landscape, showing a blue sky above an immense vineyard, green, purple, and yellow, with black and orange vine branches.

Little figures of ladies with red parasols, little figures of vineyard workers with their carts enliven the piece. Canvas of 30 square millimetres for house decoration.

I have a self-portrait all ash-coloured. The ash colour comes from mixing veronese with orange mineral on a pale veronese background, and dun-coloured clothes. But in exaggerating my personality I sought rather the character of a simple adorer of the eternal Buddha. It has given me a lot of trouble, but I shall have to do it all over again if I want to succeed in expressing the idea. I must

got myself still further cured of the conventional brutishness of our so-called civilization, in order to have a better model for a better picture.

One thing which has immensely pleased me. I received a letter yesterday from Boch (his sister is in the Belgian *Vingdistes*) who writes that he is staying in the Borinage to paint charcoal burners and miners. He proposes however to return to the South to vary his impressions, and in this case will certainly come to Arles.

I find my artistic ideas extremely vulgar compared with yours.

I have always the gross appetite of a beast.

I forget everything for the external beauty of things which I am unable to reproduce, for I reproduce it badly in my picture and myself, whereas nature seems to me perfect.

Now, however, the impulse of my bony carcass is such that it is going straight to the goal, whence results a sincerity that is something original perhaps in what I feel if, however, the *motif* lends itself to my coarse and unskilful execution.

I believe, that if, from now on, you begin to feel you are the head of this studio—which we will seek to make a shelter for several—gradually and in the degree that our intense *furious* work give us the means of carrying the idea to fruition. I believe that then you will derive some consolation for your present troubles and illness, in reflecting that we are probably giving our lives for a generation of painters yet to come.

These countries have already seen the cult of Venus—essentially artistic in Greece—then the poets and artists of the Renaissance. Where these things could flourish impressionism cannot wither.

I have taken special care to decorate your room with a *poet's garden*. In the Banal Gardens, a public park, flourish plants and bushes which make one dream of the landscapes associated with Botticelli, Giotto, Petrarch, Dante and Boccaccio. In the decoration I have sought to bring out all that is essential in the unchangeable character of the country.

And I wanted to paint this garden in such a way as to remind one both of the old poet of these parts (or rather of Avignon) Petrarch, and of the new poet of these parts, Paul Gauguin.

However maladroit this attempt may be, it will show you that in preparing your studio I have thought of you with considerable emotion.

Let us screw up our courage for the success of our enterprise

and go on thinking that you are in the right place here, for I verily believe that all this will last a long time.

Yours cordially,

VINCENT.

P.S.—I fear only that you will find Brittany more beautiful; here you see nothing more beautiful than Daumier shapes. The faces here are often absolutely Daumieresque. But you would soon discover Antiquity and the Renaissance dormant beneath all this modernity. And as for all that, you are free to resurrect them.

Bernard suggested that he, Moret, Laval and another should make an exchange with me. On principle I am really very keen on the system of exchange between artists, and I see that Japanese painters attach a considerable importance to this.

Accordingly, I will send you what studies in dry state I have available just now and you shall have the first choice. But I will not exchange anything with you if it should cost you anything as important as your portrait which would be too handsome. That I dare not, for my brother will gladly take it from you on return for a whole month.

73.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER. Quimperle, 16 October, 1888.

My dear Schuff,

What do you want me to say about your troubles concerning your name? You know my opinion of this, and it is that of all reasonable people. We have quite enough filthy vexations without creating them out of sheer folly. Don't bother yourself about it, sign "Schuffen" and leave it at that. If people like your pictures, they will not bother about the name, and won't concern themselves with precedents. They will always know who painted them and what his name is. Laval and Bernard, who want to be remembered, are of my opinion.

Send me back Vincent's letter.

Another thing, you know my itch for paying whenever I have money. Well, I have paid the doctor and something to Marie-

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I am without thinking, and now I have no funds for my journey.

Be good enough to go and see Van Gogh at once, and arrange for him to send me 50 francs. Telegraph me at once.

After I resolved to go South I managed to go down with fever. Now I am out of danger, and I believe I shall do good work.

I don't think that in a year's time I shall be out of the wood and able to come my whole life with you. In any case I shall none the less remain a faithful and devoted friend.

If you should see Gauguinin again, ask him why he has not written me. I sent him a portrait this summer and had no word from him. Is he angry because Van Gogh is running after me? In any event the greater one does not injure another.

So you talk about my terrible mysticism. Be impressionist to the very end and be afraid of nothing. Obviously this sympathetic way is full of rocks, and I have as yet only put the tip of my foot in it, but it is fundamental in my nature, and a man must always follow his temperament. I realize that I shall be understood less and less. Nations are alienate others; for the multitude I shall be an enigma, for a few I shall be a poet, and sooner or later, merit will have its way.

However that may be, I tell you that I shall eventually do first class things, I know it and we shall see. You know well enough that in art I am always right at bottom. Mark this well, a wind is blowing at the moment *among artists* which is all in my favour; I know it for one or two indiscretions and rest assured, however much Van Gogh may be in love with me, he would not bring himself to feed me in the South for my beautiful eyes. He has surveyed the terrain like a cautious Dutchman and intends to push the matter to the utmost of his powers, and to the exclusion of everything else. I asked him to lower prices to tempt buyers, but he replied that he intended, on the contrary, to raise them. Optimist as I am, this time I really have my foot on the solid earth.

Cordially yours,

PAUL GO.

Telegraph me a reply.

Let me have the pleasure of sending you a fur overcoat. I shan't see the winter again for a long while and can go about in rags. I don't care for elegance any longer and should be delighted if you would accept something from me.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER. Arles, 13 November 1873.

My dear Schuff,

Thanks for your kindness. I received the parcel, for which I waited before replying to your last letter, which crossed mine.

I was keenly disappointed to see you were refused by the Salon Independante, and Dubois-Pillet accepted. Never mind, you must grow resigned to these trifling pinpricks, which happen more often to the deserving than to others. For years the "Vingties" have been inviting Signac, Dubois, and they have never even heard of me. I have managed to survive this.

To console me, I have received a very flattering letter inviting me to and I am this year organising an important exhibition at Brussels in opposition to the dotters.

I have just sent Van Gogh two canvases which you must contrive to see—on entirely different lines, painted simply on coarse canvas in thick impasto, so that the colour divisions are hardly noticeable, hoping thereby to get a broader view.

When you have time let me have your criticisms on all this. At the moment, it seems to me to be running along at full speed like a train and, like the engine driver, I can see the terminus ahead, but what chances there are of going off the rails! Yes, I am optimistic, but you are wrong if you think this optimism springs from the thought of money to come, which I should not spend in enjoyment and rest, but in preparing for the great struggle, that I am waging now is only a little artistic skirmish. I do not want to attack until I have all the necessary weapons in my hands. I know no other force than this and I say proudly: we shall see.

You can ask Pissarro if I am not talented. No constipation and regular coitus, with independent work, and a man can pull through.

I see you opening your eyes very wide, my virtuous Schuff, at these daring sentiments. Calm yourself, eat well, make love to the best of your ability, work the same, and you will die happy.

Warm regards to all the little family from the big fool who loves you.

P. GO.



75.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

Undated, Arles, November, 1888.

My dear Bernard,

I have forgotten your father's letter and there is nothing in it you ought to know. But this time you will be advised. I hope you are not being bothered too much by the mugs which I left in such an awkward state; in any case, you are working and experimenting. I fear cardboard is not strong enough for the glue; wood has too hard a surface and might peel. But if you use a simple material like thick paper on cloth, which grips and absorbs the colour, you will obtain good results. Theatre scenery is made like this and is very durable.

You discuss shadows with Laval and ask me if I am in accord. So far as regards the analysis of light, yes. Look at the Japanese who are certainly excellent draughtsmen, and you will see him depicted in the open air and in the sunshine without shadows, colour being used only as a combination of tones, diverse harmonies, giving the impression of warmth, etc. . . . Besides, I regard impressionism as an altogether new research, absolutely removed from everything mechanical, such as photography, etc. That is why I would avoid as much as possible that which gives the illusion of a thing, and as shadow is the *trompe l'œil* of the sun, I am constrained to suppress it. If shadows come into your composition as a necessary formula, it is quite another matter. Thus instead of a shape you would get only the shadow of a person; it is an original point of departure, the strangeness of which you will have to take into account. Like the raven on the head of Pallas who sits there rather than a parrot owing to the choice of the artist—a deliberate choice. So then, my dear Bernard, put in shadows if you consider them useful; or keep them out: it comes to the same thing, provided you decline to be enslaved by shadows. I explain my ideas on the subject by and large, and leave you to read between the lines.

I send you money to pay Gloannec 280 francs, Frédéric 35, 5 francs for despatching pictures, 5 francs for both to drink my health.



Seated nude  
*Pencil drawing (Private collection)*



PAUL GAUGUIN · L

Now that the way is prepared by Vincent, it is possible for all talented artists of our generation to go so you have only to walk straight on. I advise you to leave and believe that in Africa you will get to your art and fairly comfortable. I have no question and find we can get along cheaply at home.

It's odd that Vincent feels the influence of the contrary, see the *Paulis* (de Chav) Japanese colourings. Women here with the Greek beauty. Their shawls, falling in the air, are, I say, like Greek friezes. The girl passes as much a lady as any, born and of as *vi Juno*. Anyhow, it must be seen. In all the fountain of beauty, *modern style*. Greet me to the friends with Laval, who has a fine and transcendent faults, when the Cossack's resemblance you know, you as terrible as the rest of our minds to put up with each other's hands.

•

76.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated.

My dear Mette,

Enclosed is 200 francs.

I would ask you to *acknowledge* safely know that they have not gone astray. If, I tire you too much, you could at the same time the children. I have heard nothing about time.

I am on the way to recovery, though. And my affairs are assuming a better shape.

In any case, my reputation is being made at Paris and at Brussels.

I send you a letter from Schuffenecker, better than I what is thought about my painting.

I am working to breaking point but I can see compensation in the future.

Your husband,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

2, Place Lamartine, Arles.

It is probable that I will send you something more this winter, if the Brussels exhibition, to which I have been invited, goes well, as it promises to do.

77.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER.

Undated, Arles, December, 1888.

My dear Schuff,

Bravo! You have brought it off. See Van Gogh, arrange things to the end of my stay.

Only remember it is not an exhibition<sup>1</sup> for the others. So let us arrange it for a little group of comrades, and from this point of view I should want to be represented there as fully as possible.

Do your best in my interests to secure good positions for my pictures.

- (1) Mangoes, Martinique.
- (2) The tall Breton with the little boy.
- (3) Breton woman, 1 standing, 1 on the ground.
- (4) Winter (little Breton boy fitting his wooden shoe with village in the background).
- (5) The Vicarage (landscape of 1886).
- (6) Circle of little girls.
- (7) Arles landscape.
- (8) The mas of Arles at Van Gogh's.
- (9) Pastel.
- (10) Two children fighting.

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the exhibition of paintings of the impressionist and synthetist group, held in the premises of Volpini, Café des Arts, at the Universal Exhibition in 1889, where were shown numerous canvases of Paul Gauguin, Charles Laval, Leon Fauché, Emile Schuffenecker, Louis Anquetin, Daniel de Monfield, Emile Bernard, Louis Roy and Nemo (Bernard). Guillaumin and Vincent Van Gogh did not exhibit.

Remember, it is we who are sending out the invitations, consequently:—

Schuff	...	...	10 canvases
Guillaumin	...	10	..
Gauguin	...	10	..
Bernard	...	10	..

40 canvases.

Roy	...	...	2 canvases
Man of Nancy	...	2	..
Vincent	..	6	..

making 10

This will do. For my part, I decline to exhibit with *the others*, Pissarro,<sup>1</sup> Seurat, etc.

It is our group.

I wanted to exhibit very little, but Laval told me it was my turn, and that I should do wrong in working for others.

Kindest regards to your wife and Lisses for the children.

Yours, etc.,

P. GO.

78.

TO EMILE BERNARD. Undated, Arles, December, 1888.

My dear Bernard,

Thanks for your letter and for carrying out the commission about the colours. You do not tell me if Tanguy considers himself repaid with the picture you have delivered to him. In any case the supplies sent must be paid for cash down and the money for this is with Van Gogh.

I am glad you have been to see our excellent Schuffenecker; you do not say anything about him; is he getting along; at the moment he is distressed because the Salon Independante does not want to exhibit him when it accepts Dubois-Pillet, Luce, etc.

I am at Arles quite out of my element, so petty and shabby do I find the scenery and the people. Vincent and I do not find our-

<sup>1</sup> From 1875 onwards, Gauguin had profited from Pissarro's advice. He even stayed with Pissarro at Osny in 1883, where he painted several canvases. Many works of his impressionist period reveal the strong influence which Pissarro exerted on his friend.

selves in general agreement<sup>1</sup>, especially in painting. He admires Daumer, Daubigny, Ziem and the great Rousseau, all people I cannot endure. On the other hand, he detests Ingres, Raphael, Degas, all people whom I admire; I answer: "Corporal, you're right," for the sake of peace. He likes my paintings very much, but while I am doing them he always finds that I am doing this or that wrong. He is romantic while I am rather inclined towards a primitive state. When it comes to colour he is interested in the accidents of the pigment, as with Monticelli<sup>2</sup>, whereas I detest this messing about in the medium, etc.

I do not know what to reply about the two drawings which your mother has kept. They are not mine but belong to Van Gogh, who sent me 50 francs this summer for a drawing. They are therefore to be handed to him. I do not understand how your mother has come to regard as a present what she took upon herself as a commission. I don't want to appear a miser, and this is what I propose: There is at Goupil's a little squat unpolished pot decorated with a bird on a blue green background. Accept this from me. Van Gogh will give it you if you show him this letter. I bequeath it to Madeleine.

Silence is the order of the day, but I hope she will sometimes think of her elder brother when she is putting flowers in it. It is a pretty rough thing, but bears far more the impression of myself than the sketch of little girls. She will therefore lose nothing in exchange. The pot is well cooled and it has withstood a temperature of 1600 degrees. Best respects to your mother.

Affectionate handclasp. Vincent sends you his regards and asks me to thank you for the study you sent him in exchange.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

<sup>1</sup> Gauguin's visit to Arles was to end dramatically. On the 24th December, about nine o'clock in the evening, Van Gogh, in a fit of madness, rushed at his friend with an open razor in his hand. Returning home he cut off his right ear, which he washed and slipped into an envelope, in order to deliver it to a prostitute whom he frequented. Gauguin, who had escaped with a bad fright, left the next day for Paris without seeing Vincent again.

<sup>2</sup> Born and died in Marseilles, fond of vivid colours, but discouraged by public indifference.

79.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Paris, February, 1889.

My dear Mette,

The day before yesterday a young man brought me all of vests from you. I thank you for this attention. Henceforth I shall be rich in waistcoats; the three other summer ones are still in the condition.

Business in Paris goes from bad to worse and I don't know how it will end up. A slump on the Stock Exchange every day.

How are you getting on without Miss Engelmann? I thought she was a friend you couldn't do without.

You tell me nothing of your family and companions being alone: so they don't come to see you? I confess I cannot make out your solitude; you have your French lessons and admirers. Who all flatter you—you told me yourself the last time that I saw you, that you were very much spoiled. Nobody to order you about, a thing you do not like, and charming children around you. True, your apartments may not be all you desire, but compared with me you are in Paradise. •

Which reminds me. I read in the paper that at a Nice festival everybody noticed the attractive Miss de Farbe, wife of the Danish diplomat. Has the "imbecile of the yellow thread" perchance become a wealthy personage? After all, there would be nothing surprising in this, as there are no limits to human stupidity.

The Schuffeneckers send you their best wishes. Schuffenecker holds you in high esteem when he compares you with the millstone around his neck.

Another one who has marriage "over his head."

Let me have news of Copenhagen and of everybody. Will your friends come to the Exhibition this year?

Your husband,

PAUL.

80.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

Undated, Paris, February, 1889.

My dear Bernard,

I do not know what to make of it; I sought you in vain at the



Exhibition. I have been to the Buffalo. At all costs, you must come and see that! It is great. Come on Wednesday and have breakfast with Schuff and we will go in the afternoon.

Tell me if you can't come.

P. GAUGUIN.

81.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

Undated, Paris, March, 1889.

My dear Bernard,

You missed something in not coming the other day. In the Java village there are Hindoo dances. All the art of India can be seen there, and it is exactly like the photos I have. I go there again on Thursday as I have an appointment with a mulatto girl.

Come on Thursday, but I don't want to be there too late; come either for breakfast at noon, or at 1 o'clock (at Schuff's). As to Buffalo we will go on Saturday.

I intend to leave on Tuesday next<sup>1</sup> and I must see about packing my traps.

P. GAUGUIN.

82.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Le Pouldu, end of June, 1889.

My dear Mette,

Yes, you have not heard from me for over six months; but it is more than six months since I received news of the children. It seems there must be a serious accident<sup>2</sup> before I do hear, which scarcely disposes me to cheerfulness, although you say all danger is now over.

Does one ever know; one might become lame or imbecile as a result of a thing like that and the signs would not show until long after. Anyhow, I am hardened to adversity.

Do you realise the number of times I have written and my letter crossed yours, and because you seem to be the last to write, you play at silence? Whether I write or do not write, does not your conscience tell you that I ought to have news of the children

<sup>1</sup> Return to Pont-Aven.

<sup>2</sup> His son Pola had a fall.

whom I have not seen for five years? Yet you impress upon me, whenever opportunity offers, that I am their father!

When there was a possibility of my going to see them some six months ago (which arose quite suddenly), your Copenhagen people discovered that it was not worth while to make such an expense. Money reasons always—those of the heart are not worth considering. Poor woman, to allow yourself to be abused so badly, and by people in short, who do not pay, either in money or in broken hearts. What money is lost when the partners are not in agreement, is something you will never understand.

What is it you want of me? Above all, what have you ever wanted of me? Whether in the Indies or elsewhere, I am, it appears, to be a beast of burden for wife and children whom I must not see. By way of return for my homeless existence, I am to be loved if I love, I am to be written to if I write. You know me. Either I weigh matters (and weigh them well) or I do not. Heart in hand, eyes front and I fight with uncovered breast. Your powerful sister has not abdicated her authority over you, but, in return, where is the protection she promised you?

Very well then, I accept the rôle that has been assigned to me, and then I must calculate—not to lose the substance for the shadow—(the shadow being the rôle of an employee). If I should get a job at 2,000 or 4,000 francs—your brothers' figures—there would be no complaint to make against me, and yet we should both be practically in the same position. As to the future, no one ever gives a thought to it.

I determined, despite the certitude which my conscience gave me, to consult others (men who also count) to ascertain if I was doing my duty. All are of my opinion, that art is my business, my capital, the future of my children, the honour of the name I have given them—all things which will be useful to them one day. When they have to make their way in the world, a famous father may prove a valuable asset.

You will retort that this will be a long time ahead, but what do you want me to do about it? Is it my fault? I am the first to suffer from it. I can assure you that if those who know about such things had said that I have no talent and that I am wasting my time, I would have abandoned the attempt long ago. Can it be said that Millet failed in his duty and bequeathed a wretched future to his children?

You want my news?

I am in a fishermen's inn<sup>1</sup> at the seaside, near a village of 150 inhabitants. I live here like a peasant, and work every day in canvas trousers (all those of five years ago are worn out). I spend a franc a day on my food and two pence on tobacco. So no one can say I am extravagant. I speak to nobody, and I have no news of the children. Only—only this—I am exhibiting my works at Goupil's in Paris, and they are creating a great sensation; but it is difficult to sell them. When this is going to happen, I cannot tell you, but what I can tell you is that to-day I am one of the artists who arouse the greatest astonishment. You have exhibited some old things of mine at Copenhagen. My opinion might have been sought first of all.

The 7th June, '89, passed without one of the children thinking of it. Anyhow, all's well that ends well. I am making inquiries through influential friends about a situation in Tonkin, where I hope I should be able to live for some time and await better times. As such posts are paid, you could have part of the pictures sold at Goupil's. As for the present I have nothing. I rather anticipate the sale of a wood carving. As soon as I have the proceeds I will send you 300 francs—you can rely upon getting them; it is only a question of time. I am writing to Paris to try to push the sale.

At the Universal Exhibition this year I have exhibited in a *Café Chantant*; perhaps some Danes will have seen it and told you about it. In any case, nearly all Norwegians see at Goupil's what I do and Philippsen, whom I met in Paris, has also seen them.

Once for all do not end your letters with that dry phrase 'Your wife, Mette'; I should prefer you to say plainly what you think. I have spoken to you about it before, but you have not wanted to understand.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

Pouldu, near Quimperlé (Finistère).

<sup>1</sup> Exasperated by the painters and bathers who flocked in growing numbers to Pont-Aven and prevented him from working, Gauguin moved to Pouldu, into a little inn kept by Marie Henry, nicknamed Marie Poupée. A few faithful friends accompanied him, a Dutchman, Meyer de Haan, Charles Filiger, Armand Séguin. Paul Sérusier looked them up several times, and Paul-Emile Colin, the engraver, spent several weeks with them in August and September, 1889.

83.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER.

Le Pouldu, July, 1889.

My dear Schuff,

I received a mournful letter from Copenhagen, the first for eight months.

Baby is in hospital; he fell from the third floor and it is a marvel that he escaped at all. As it is, he is in bad state with convulsions. Judge then, my poor Schuff, if life has any savour for me. If I had a few sous I would send a little money to them: to crown all, my paintings and carvings this year appeal everybody!

I have been inquiring about a possible situation in Tonkin, which I am anxious to secure, to give me breathing space for a year or two, when the financial outlook will be better for impressionism.

I wrote recently to Bernard, from whom I have heard nothing. His father must have intercepted the letter. Tell him this.

No news from Laval.

Have you received a hare I had sent to you more than a month ago?

Regards to Madame and the children.

P. GO.

84.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

Undated, Le Pouldu, August, 1889.

My dear Bernard,

I have read your letter to Laval, who showed it to me. I thought you were in Paris and you are at St. Briac—by your father's orders, which also forbid you to come to Pont-Aven. You are not losing much anyhow, as Pont-Aven is full of objectionable trippers. Fortunately, I have a studio<sup>1</sup> at Avains, where I can retire for shelter. Moreover, I have been more than a month at Pouldu with de Haan because I am floundering in a slough of despond and struggling with work which requires a certain time for completion.

<sup>1</sup> Gauguin had transformed into a studio the first floor of a little farm situated at Avains, near Pont-Aven. This studio was tenanted for several years by the painter Emile Compard.

I find pleasure, not in going farther along the lines I prepared formerly, but in trying something fresh. I feel it if I cannot explain it. I am certain to get there eventually, but slowly in spite of my impatience. In these conditions, my tentative studies yield only a maladroit and amateur result. Anyhow, I hope that this winter you will find in me an almost new Gauguin—I say almost, because I disclaim the pretension of inventing something new. What I am trying to get at is “a corner of myself” which I do not yet understand. Many things have happened therefore to explain my gloom.

I have received from Aurer<sup>1</sup> the *Moderniste*, with a part of your article. Good. Every little counts!

I am preparing an article on the purchase of pictures for the Louvre and attacking the contemporary art critic.

I return in three days to Pont-Aven, because I can live on credit there and my money is gone. I expect to stay there till the winter, and if I can then get any kind of post in Tonkin<sup>2</sup> I will slip off to study the Annamites

P. GAUGUIN.

Vincent has written me and asks to be remembered to you. He is still in hospital.

85.

TO ALBERT AURIER. Undated, Pont-Aven, end August, 1889.

Dear Sir,

I send you the short article hoping you will give it the same welcome as the first. I think it would be useful at the moment.

Make any alterations you like.

Kindly send me a copy of the number, if you insert it.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

<sup>1</sup> Albert Aurer (1865-1892), writer and art critic, one of the founders of the *Mercur de France*. Drawn into the symbolist movement, he contributed to the *Plume*, the *Décadent* and the *Moderniste*. It was he who hailed Gauguin as the leader of pictorial symbolism in a famous article on the *Vision after the Sermon*. He died early at 27 of typhoid fever caught at Marseilles.

<sup>2</sup> He hoped to obtain a minor post in the Tonkin civil service.

86.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER.

1 September, 1889.

My dear Schuff.

What a long time since I heard from you.

On the other hand, I have received the pot you sent and which is very successful. I saw mother Reynier who gave me word of you. You have made some sales, it seems. Fine, and you ought to be satisfied. I know of old what a pessimist you are, but everything comes to him who waits.

As for the exhibition, Guillaumin writes me that people are ignoring it. There is an acid note in his letter—the intelligence has decidedly departed. But these days, I don't bat an eyelid.

Write me at length all that is being said and done.

Nothing much new here. Except that I am working. The Pont-Aven fight is over; everybody is humbled, and the Julian studio is beginning to tack about to humbug the school. Manet's triumph has crushed them.

Greetings to all the comrades.

P. GO.

I do not remember Lambert's address. You would be doing me a good turn by asking him to make a wooden panel, which I want for a carving I hope to do here in the intervals. I should like it as soon as possible. Forgive me for always giving you commissions.

87.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

Undated, Pont-Aven, early September, 1889

My dear Bernard,

Reading your letter I perceive that we are both pretty much in the same boat. Moments of doubt, results always below expectations; and the little encouragement we get, all this helps to drag us through the thistles and thorns.

Well then, what can we do but fume and grapple with all the

<sup>1</sup> During Clovis Gauguin's illness in January, 1886, a neighbour. Mrs. Reynier, nursed him with devotion, while his father pasted up bills.

d moments; when beaten, to get up and go on again. For ever and ever. At bottom, painting is like man, mortal but living always in conflict with flesh. If I thought of the absolute, I should cease to make any effort even to live. Let us be satisfied with what we are—whether incomplete or perfect. Although I have no patience, nor enough strength, and suffer the maximum agonies hoping for ultimate perfection, I suffer and live always in hope. I am chary of giving advice (which is always a delicate matter), and yet I think that you would do well for some time to study according to your inclinations, since you believe at the moment that art is absolutely bound up with technical processes. If later you become, like me, sceptical in this respect, you will do something else. I confess that I feel in this language something quite different from the words, however harmonious. Corot, Chotto—seduced me by some quality quite apart from the solidity of their painting. You know how I esteem the work of Degas and yet I feel that there is something he lacks—a heart that beats. The tears of a child are something, but they can't be said to show wisdom. In short, I much admire masterpieces of every kind, those of emotion and those of technique; hence there is work to be done in both spheres. It is obvious that you are highly gifted and also that you know a great deal. Why bother about the opinions of idiots or jealous people? I do not think that this can disturb you for long.

As for myself, I have not been spoilt much by others, and I even expect to become more and more incomprehensible. What do I care. You are young and I think you lack something, a void which age will soon fill. It is a great deal that you yourself feel that, in spite of all you have seen, felt and endured, you have not found yourself. But all are well right itself. There have been old men who affirmed their youthful beliefs, but they unlike us, had nothing to disturb them such as the turmoil of existence and the pictures of others. You have seen too much in too short a time. Take a rest from seeing—for a very long time. Take whatever pleases you from what I tell you. In any case be assured that on my part there is nothing but the best intentions.

I have returned to Pont-Aven until the end of September, and I have just finished two good canvases, for myself, in the sense that they nearly express what I wanted to say at the moment—I say nearly and I am so far satisfied, hoping that the more of them I do, the better they will become.

I have also designed a large panel of 30 in. carving<sup>1</sup> to be carried out later in wood when I have money to buy it. Not a penny in my pocket. I have also carved something better and even more remarkable. Gauguin (as a monster) seizing the hand of a protesting woman, saying to her: Be amorous and you will be happy. The Indian fox symbol of perversity, then little figures in the interstices. The wood will be coloured.

This winter we may have a large house which Haan wants to rent. It has a studio 12 by 15 metres overlooking the sea. In this case Laval and Moret would join us, and we could live very cheaply. You might be able to complete this group.

Now to bed.

Cordially yours,

P. GO.

88.

TO ALBERT AURIER.

No date, Le Pouldu, October, 1889.

Dear Sir,

Some time ago I sent you an article. Have you received it? I should be grateful for a word from you that it has arrived.

Yours very sincerely,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

Pouldu, near Quimperlé, Finistère.

89.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

No date. Le Pouldu, October, 1889.

My dear Bernard,

Your letter was a little delayed. Pouldu is not Morbihan, but Finistère, near Quimperlé. Your letter, written in haste, is a trifle obscure. I gather that we have to exhibit in Lisbon. That you are going to Lisbon and your cousin is bringing the canvases. You mention a picture sold, but I have no knowledge of it. Van Gogh

<sup>1</sup> Gauguin was in the sequel very pleased with this wood carving, which gave concrete form to his ideas about love. This magnificent work belongs to Mrs. Jeanne Schuffenecker. A sketch is shown on this letter.



has sold for me the little dancers in the kiln. Is it this? I have decorated our enormous studio with lithographic subjects, P.G. O and Bernard, Japanese, etc. It is splendid and we are working at this moment with storms raging in front of us—for we are immediately above the sea.

You promise that you will write me a long letter explaining your enforced sojourn far from us.

Are you working much? I am working on a great wood carving (panel of 30 with nude figures<sup>1</sup>). I have made a conquest here of a new Countess: she is enchanted with impressionism, and intends, on her return to Paris, to win over to our side many of her acquaintances—(Rouvier, Finance Minister, among others) whom she will persuade to buy my carving. In the absence of something concrete, we must live on hope. Laval has left for Paris and now wants to go to another district—perhaps he will work there? In any event he did not touch a brush during his six months in Brittany. Chamailard<sup>1</sup>, on the other hand, has done an excellent portrait of his wife. Moret nothing much. De Haan gets along splendidly here. He sends you his regards.

Sincerely,

P. GO.

90.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER.

No date, Moelan, October, 1889.

My dear Schuff,

What has become of you? It seems that you are cross with me. Because I rebuffed Champsor<sup>2</sup>. First, the picture he wanted was sold for 500 to Montaudon, and I cannot sell it over again. Moreover, he is a vulgar scribbler not worth the rope for hanging. Second his articles mean nothing. You may find worth in them, I cannot. Yet again, his attitude in this matter was menacing, and I do not like this. Besides—that is all.

I have this year made disciples more important than Champ-sor. Another Countess who is well known in Parisian society, is

<sup>1</sup>Ernest de Chamailard deserted the Quimper Bar for painting and joined Gauguin, whom he admired. His works, which are mainly owned by Breton collectors, are little known.

<sup>2</sup>The writer Champsaur.

smitten with me and the Impressionists. She is now in Paris beating the drum for our pictures. Her daughter paints and has now begun to do so on our lines, and so on.

I haven't done much painting recently — working on a carving in wood which I am sending to Paris next month and via which I am pretty satisfied. However, you will see it. The Countess has promised me she will make Rouvier the Minister say it. If this happens, it will be seen to the best advantage.

Another thing. I am on the coast in a large house immediately overlooking the sea. When storms rage it is magnificent. I am working here with a Dutchman who is my pupil and a very good fellow. I do not think of going to Paris until the winter, and then for a month only, provided I sell something. I am looking on enough for a trip to Holland, to see the Rembrandts at close quarters. But these are all projects.

Anyhow, this planning is better than weeping.

You have submitted again to the teaching yoke<sup>1</sup>, my poor Schuff. Have you done any work this year?

Guillaumin has been to Auvergne, which has yielded good results.

Write me a line. Greetings to children, wife, brother, mother, in short everybody.

Cordially yours,

P. GO.

91.

TO EMILE BERNARD. No date, Le Pouldu, November, 1889.

My dear Bernard,

What can I say to you, at this moment when everything is crashing around me? I am tied to Pouldu by debts, which I have little hope of seeing paid. Van Gogh gives no sign because he can do nothing and according to what I divine and what Schuff tells me, our affairs are in a bad way, while Van Gogh has got married and is tied to the whims of the home, which is not healthy for us. Then what! the only person who up till now has bothered about me, is obliged to go off, and I am not on the spot to try to remedy matters.

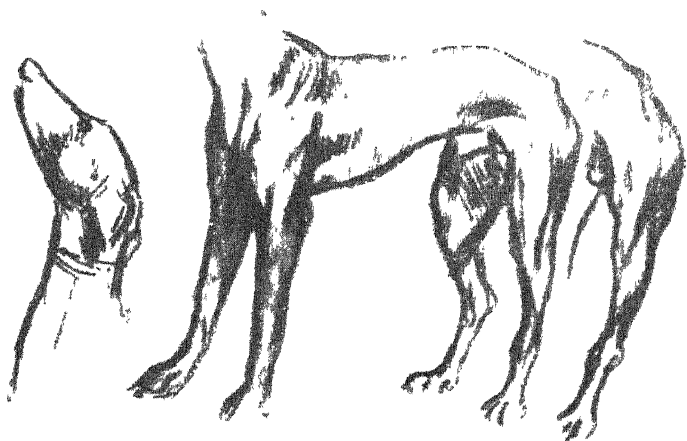
<sup>1</sup> Schuffenecker was professor of drawing at Vanves, later Michelet College

I have made application to go to Tonkin, but the replies up to date are, for all intents and purposes, negative. The people they send to the Colonies are generally those who play pranks, steal the cash box, etc. . . . But me, an impressionist artist, that is to say, a rebel—it is out of the question. And on top of this, I am ill, suffering from accumulated spicen and gail, the physical result of the redoubled blows of misfortune which oppress and depress me, so that at the moment I have scarcely the energy or the will to work. And work used to make me forget. In the long run, this isolation, this concentration upon myself, while all the chief joys of life are cut off and intimate satisfaction is denied me, cries out for relief as an empty stomach for food. At the last, it proves a delusion so far as happiness is concerned, unless one is made of stone and is absolutely insensible. Despite all my efforts to become such an one, I fail. Mother Nature gets the upper hand all the time. Such is Gauguin in the toils, his hand burning in the furnace, and he is not able to suppress his cries. No doubt I shall get over this. What is man in this immense creation, and who am I to complain more than another. But unfortunately I see a different result in the case of others, and what might help a rascal to tolerate loneliness has the opposite effect on me.

Your phrase: "You know how fond we are of you," gives me pleasure, and, whether deliberate or otherwise, the plural "we" considerably adds to it. Did you send the critical periodical? What lunacy this article is! However, the nonsense fails to wound. Féneón does well in saying that I imitated Anquetin<sup>1</sup> whom I don't even know. It seems that Eve did not speak negro, but good God! what language did she speak, she and the serpent? Thanks for photographs.

Your beautiful group of the Magdalen supported by two women is so well arranged in line and effect and expresses so well the essence of this scene that there is no room for the other personages to share in it as sorrowfully--personages necessary perhaps to the arrangement of line, but I would have them more stupid than suffering. This fine representation of the Magdalen who has done more by her love for belief in the resurrection is sufficient. And, I

<sup>1</sup> Louis Arquetin, born at Etrappigny in 1861, died in Paris in 1932. Admirable artist, friend of Emile Bernard, with whom in late 1887 he had made the first attempts at synthesis. He, too, repudiated these theories in order to indulge a passionate admiration for Rubens.



Gauguin Dog Studies  
*Water colour drawing*



repeat, you have caught her admirably; I look at her now as at a different Magdalen than the one I knew. Don't think up a bad part; it may be wrong, as I am just not so much as that everything bothers me.

Greetings to you both from my troubled heart.

P. GAUGUIN.

92.

TO EMILE BERNARD. No date, Le Pouldu, November, 1889.

Your disconsolate letter reaches a countryside as sorrowful. I understand the bitterness which sweeps over you at the foolish reception of you and your works. They should be very beautiful this year—Schuff tells me that they were of fine mystic quality. What would you rather have? a mediocrity which pleases everybody or a talent which breaks new ground. We must choose if we have free will. Would you have the power of choice if choosing leads to suffering—a Nessus shirt which sticks to you and cannot be stripped off? Attacks on originality are to be expected from those who lack the power to create and shing their shoulders. At your age you have a lifetime before you. As for me, of all my efforts this year, nothing remains but howls from Paris which penetrate here and discourage me to such a degree that I dare not paint any more, and can only drag my old body about on the sea shore of Le Pouldu in the bleak North wind. Mechanically I make a few studies (if you can call brush strokes in accord with the eye, studies). But the soul of me is absent and is mournfully regarding the pit which gapes in front of it—the pit in which I see the desolate family deprived of paternal support—and no heart on which to unload my suffering.

Since January my sales have totalled 925 francs. At the age of 42, to live on that, buy colours, etc., is enough to daunt the stoutest heart. It is not so much the privations now as that the future difficulties loom so high when we are low. In face of the impossibility of living, even meanly, I do not know what to do. I am making efforts to obtain some kind of a post in Tonkin, where I might be able to work peacefully as I wish.

As for painting for the market, even impressionist pictures, *NO*.

I have been groping within myself for a more elevated sensibility, and I seem almost to have grasped it this year. Then, good God! I mutter; I may be wrong and they may be right, and that's why I have written to Schnuff to ascertain your views, to guide me a little in the midst of my trouble. I see that you have read between the lines, that you see I seem to have hit upon something: and I am strengthened in my opinions, and I shall not renounce them, but forge ahead steadily all the time.

And this in spite of Degas, who, next to Van Gogh, is the chief author of the whole collapse. He does not, in fact, find in my canvases what he says he sees there—the model's bad smell. He divines in us a movement contrary to his. Ah! had I, like Cézanne, the sinews of war, I would enter the fray with delight. We are not alone in giving battle; you see that Corot, etc., have been justified by time. But what poverty assails us to-day, what difficulties! As for me, I own myself beaten—by events, by men, by the family, but not by public opinion. I scorn it and I can do without admirers. I won't say that at your age I was like this, but by the exertion of sheer will power, that is what I am like to-day. Let them study carefully my last pictures: and, if they have any feelings at all, they will see what resigned suffering is in them—a cry wrung from the heart. But thus it was written—that I have no heart, that I must be wicked, cross-grained and prickly. However, let that pass. But you, why do you suffer, too? You are young, and too early you begin to carry the cross. Do not rebel: one day, you will feel a joy in having resisted the temptation to hate, and there is truly intoxicating poetry in the goodness of him who has suffered. Moreover, if there is yet time, do not love. It takes it out of you. I seem to be saying two contradictory things, but on reflection, you will see that it is only apparently so. At your age, you have need now and then to burst out. I am in no mind to blame you since it is a need, but choose your twin soul with care. When you are forty, you will weigh the twin souls in the balance, and see what little remains.

I do not want to shatter your illusions, but what would you, friend. I am passing through such a phase of disillusionment that I cannot help a cry escaping me.

I have heard nothing of Laval for a month. I fear the poor fellow has been seduced into idleness.

If you see Aurier ask him about the second article that I sent him about the Millet sale.

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Be good enough to send me my friend's address.  
Courage, dear friend! One more effort, and your  
plans may one day be executed in the future.

At last,

P. GAUGUIN.

Greeting to your sister. Write sometimes.

93.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER Moolan, November, 1889

My dear Schuff,

Yes, I had your postcard and letter, and I intended to write you last night. In your letter you tell me to apply to Van Gogh, which I did at once, but have had no reply. In any event, I don't rely much on business of this sort—always offered below prices which are not high to begin with.

If you see Laval, tell him I am still awaiting the long letter that he promised me.

I have just sent my wood carving to Paris; it should reach Goupil in a fortnight. Let us hope it will sell better than the painting, but not at Champsor's price. I am in real straits.

I have no news of Bernard. Is he back in Paris?

Yours,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

Pouldu, Finistère, near Quimperlé.

94.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER.

No date, Le Pouldu, 16 November, 1889.

My dear Schuff,

For the time being 30 francs is a consideration. The frame costs 8 francs, which makes the drawing 22 francs. Done! I am toiling up the steps of a rugged Calvary. From Paris I am deafened by the cries my latest pictures have provoked. I don't say they are



... but I am sure they will lead to something more perfect than the pictures.

As to Degas I don't bother about him, and I am not going to spend my life rubbing pumice stone over an inch of canvas during five sittings of a model. With better the price it is, that is too much!

Despite this, I shall have to sail close to the wind.

If you see Bernard, ask him to enquire of Aurier of the *Moderniste* what has become of a long article of mine, and what he thinks of my last roughed paintings.

Look at the carving at Van Gogh's; it should be there now.

PAUL GO.

95.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

No date, Le Pouldu, 16 November, 1889.

My dear Bernard,

Thanks for book and photos. Of these two I like the Christ better. True you can't see much from the photo, but colour apart, the Christ seems to me not only better, but really fine. From one end to the other the canvas reflects a meaning, an imaginative style which knocks me flat. The disproportionate length of the figure in prayer is very bold and adds to its movement. You did right to exaggerate it; one can forget the model and this damnable flesh. The soldiers are well arranged. I see a head of Judas which slightly resembles me in the photo. Don't be alarmed. I shall not take offence. Strangely enough, I have used the same *motif*, but in another way. I am keeping this canvas<sup>1</sup>; no use showing it to Van Gogh; it would be understood even less than the rest. I sent the sketch of it in a letter to Vincent, who wrote me a gloomy letter. I am tired, I have just written Van Gogh a letter of sixteen pages on the subject of all this furore of which I see the reason clearly enough. Our exhibition—you and I raised a few storms. I said as much to Van Gogh, when explaining to him what the two of us are after, why we are working etc., I have told him bluntly that he was wrong in listening to Degas and everybody, and that he ought to form his own opinions.

<sup>1</sup> *Christ in the Garden of Olives.*





I am glad you have seen the carving and that you understand it; nobody else appears to. But what does it matter? It is either a work of art or not. If you see the *Motiviste* with my second article, send it to me or get Schuffenecker to do so.

Sincerely,

P. GAUGUIN

69.

TO MADELEINE BERNARD.

Le Pouldu, 10<sup>e</sup> Novembre, 1889.

Dear Sister,

I shall scold Emile for having shown you my letter revealing something of my state of mind, which I confided to none but him, but I don't like scolding, his intentions being so excellent and having brought me a letter from you. A year has gone by since we both had a chat. The misfortunes of us painters must not make you miserable; there are sweet pleasures in store for you.

My advice to Emile to distrust his heart means this. That he is not made to play with friendship. The man who is deceived suffers and loses strength for the struggle, which strength he needs as artist. The torments of self esteem wear themselves out and sometimes stimulate talent more than flattery; but those of the heart—for him who possesses it—are terrible indeed; enough! Friends, good people, do exist but they have to be found. Far be it from me, whom suffering of every kind has aged, to beguile you young people of twenty into the general belief in deceptions. I am attached to both of you because you are both sterling modern life, which is so difficult, egoistic and venal, with an equipment different from the majority; the love of beautiful things, hearts that ask nothing but to confide, and disinterestedness—three fine flowers which make me fond of you, but which also make me afraid. My horizon is black, and I see no rift in the clouds unless I can offer you my co-operation in life. At all events, rest assured that I will do all that I can do. In spite of all the social conventions which keep a young girl away from any friend, never fear to ask my advice on the day of misfortune or sorrow. At this moment I want to please you and sign our fraternal treaty. Ask Emile to obtain

from Schuff a large pot that he saw me make; it is meant to represent the head of Gauguin the savage, and please accept it from me as a slight token of the pleasure your letter has given me in my Pouldu solitude.

Kindest regards.

P. GO.

Note.—This letter is written on the back of the preceding.

97.

TO ALBERT AURIER. No date, Pont-Aven, December, 1889.

Dear Sir,

I requested Bernard to send me the *Pleiade*<sup>1</sup> which contains your "Salon and Modernism," which has interest for me. Herewith a few stamps.

Sincerely,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

98.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER.

No date, Pont-Aven, January, 1890.

My dear Schuffenecker,

Best of thanks for your letter and its contents. It happens that I have written to Bernard that I want to leave for Paris, so your offer to send me the money for the journey comes at the right time and I accept it most gladly. Moreover, in Paris I can bestir myself to sell something, and I think I can pay you back in a short time. I will come by train on the 4th or 5th. And if I should not succeed in my Tonkin project, I will try to work at something outside painting, for I must hold my course for some time.

Or better still I will urge the Minister of Finance to give me something in France, no matter what. But I must be in Paris for this. I gathered from your letter that, in spite of all, you have grandiose ideas about the house you intend to build. Let us hope you will not forget them.

PAUL GAUGUIN.

<sup>1</sup> Forerunner of the *Mercure de France*.

TO HIS WIFE.

Paris, January, 1890

My dear Mette,

I think everything is going well if not for the immediate present at least for the future. This year the Meissner group is organising a section for sculptural art and yesterday I received here an emissary from those gentlemen, Renan's son, who was instructed to invite me expressly to exhibit my ceramic and my paintings. Being almost alone in this class or at any rate the most conspicuous, I stand a chance of achieving some success, having from Mirbeau and his colleagues the promise of quite a no-compromise campaign in my favour. The two things combined might launch me.

Speaking of Mirbeau, I send you a letter of his which will explain his article, that you Northern people thought full of exaggeration.

It will show you in any case that it was the result of genuine enthusiasm, and not merely puffing. Keep this letter, which I may one day need for my defence. I assume that my affairs interest you, that they are our joint concern, despite the maledictions unjustly heaped on my head by your family.

I will not discuss all my interests with you, but only our common cause as man and wife, unless what you said during your visit is sheer hypocrisy, designed to appease and avoid conflict in anticipation of a better pecuniary state in the future.

Because I have loved you alone and love you still without return on your part (save upon terms), you may believe that my judgment and calculations are nothing but wishful thinking. Well, never mind. The result differs only in happiness and by this even you can judge whether I am able to remain cold before our intestine war.

I will certainly not fail you in duty whatever you may do, but—there is too much for me to explain—read between the lines. The past can never be wiped out, but the future may hold compensation.

Kisses for you. Your family need have no fear: these kisses

are not dangerous and will not increase your family. Farewell, dear Mette, be good to the children—kiss them for me. All the best for both of us.

P. GAUGUIN.

Before sending this letter which I wrote some days ago, I have been awaiting the photos you were to send me. What has become of them?

100.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Paris, February, 1890.

My dear Mette,

Your letters are rare but are also short. I was despairing at having your address and news of the children when your young friend came to see me in my temporary lodging, lent by a friend. He gave me your address and the news. It was as far back as May since I had news of you and your family through Fritz, who appeared very happy in his new marital situation; I did not offer my congratulations.<sup>1</sup> In spite of all our quarrels with Ingeborg I must say as a matter of truth that this woman is the limit. She seemed to me as coarse and as dull as possible, with sharp and slavish appetites. Perhaps that is what is lacking in him. Happiness is reserved for the few.

In your brief letter you affect to believe that I am pretty miserable and you rightly say, why weep? But wrongly that our lives are broken. Obviously weeping won't help. The past can never be cancelled—we may sometimes forget it.

I have some satisfaction, if not in money at least in self-esteem: every day I see my reputation growing and an increasing promise for the future. But I am miserable enough when I reflect on my solitary life, without mother, without family, children. Cursed by my relations. Your two years silence, which started when I went to Martinique, tried me sorely, made me more

<sup>1</sup> The Norwegian painter, Fritz Thaulow, married to one of Mette Gauguin's sisters, had been divorced and married again shortly after. The famous picture, *The painter Thaulow and his family* (1895), represents the artist's new wife and with her children

wretched than my financial reverses. But it had the advantage—it hardened me and strengthened me to scorn everything.

May the day come—and perhaps soon—when I can flee to the woods on a South Sea island, and live there in ecstasy, in peace and for art. With a new family, far from this European struggle for money. There, in Tahiti, in the silence of the lovely tropic night, I can listen to the sweet murmuring music of my heart, floating in amorous harmony with the mysterious beings of my environment. Free at last, with no money troubles, and able to love, to sing and to die. Our two lives are broken, you say? You are wrong. Yours is unshackled, and in the midst of your family and your children, your days are gliding by if not without irksome labour, at least free from marital constraint, adulterated, respected and loved. Your efforts are rewarded.

The children's photos are excellent, and the group very intelligently arranged. Aline seems strangely beautiful, and Clovis, my dear Clovis, both neat and refined. Thanks for sending them to me.

PAUL GAUGUIN

It is advisable to write me care of Schuffenecker. I do not know how long I shall be staying here.

101.

TO HIS WIFE.

Undated, Paris, early April, 1890.

My dear Mette,

What am I to think of your changeable mind? Of your contradictory letters and most of all, of the spirit that prompts them? I should like to see you again, and embrace you once more! I have so many things to say to you—before last letter—do not come before the 15th April so that I can receive you, etc. . . .

And this last letter—I am afraid of your meeting my brothers and I love my peace of mind *above all*. Think well before coming and think of the separation. Come at the end of April and leave at the end of April!

I find all this difficult to reconcile. Gratuitous difficulties are piled on this journey: you leave for the country so early and in



the winter the room is occupied. This is just what happened before I went to Panama. You write me in terms of admiration, then, when I get stuck—I am nobody, etc. . . .

Anyhow, I prefer to know nothing except how to extricate myself for the future, when it will be better. In spite of all the difficulties, I do believe the future will be *better for me*.

Moreover there is the expense of the journey, and whilst I should have a holiday and save the cost of my food, I am likely to annoy your dear brothers and your dear mother and prevent you going into the country for the summer. I prefer to hold back and do without seeing the children. After all, I should be seeing them all too soon and all that goes with this.

I must be in Paris on the 20th to fire a statue which I believe I have sold, and could not therefore come to Copenhagen before the end of April. So don't refer to it any more—have a good time this summer, and may God come to your assistance.

Are the 60 crowns for Emil's first communion really necessary? Always the fripperies of vanity for the children before the things that matter. If they are necessary, although I have not a shirt to my back, I will do what I can to send them.

*Salut.*

Your husband,

PAUL.

102.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

Undated, Paris, April, 1890.

My dear Bernard,

I have read your letter to Schuffenecker. Why do you not write to me? So you find commercial designing disappointing! It is work that goes against the grain for an artist gifted as you are. An artist clever, really clever in the execution of such work, would never have the necessary bad taste. Well, well, go on so that you may learn to know all about it. After all, these disappointments are less harmful than others—a good shove of the shoulders gets you clear—and also of love and what follows. God keep you! (I refer to this because you touch on the subject in your letter.)

As you know my opinions thereon, I need not repeat them.

Artistic matters don't advance much. And I have already reached a mature age, nearing the end of the road, as they say, and I deem it futile to continue the struggle without trump cards in my hand. And as for doing commercial work in order to live, I would not, even if I could.

Just at this moment there is a rift in the clouds.

I am on the eve of selling, apart from Goupil, a parcel of canvases for 5,000 francs—very cheap of course. I am in direct touch with the buyer, who will not have the funds for a month; I shan't believe it until the money is actually in my pocket.

I have made up my mind to go to Madagascar. I intend to buy a little place in the country which I can enlarge myself, to plant and live simply. There are models and everything necessary for studying. I will then found the Studio of the Tropics. Whoever likes can come and see me. I have made inquiries in various quarters, and understand that 5,000 francs would keep one there for 30 years, if necessary.

It costs nothing to live for those prepared to live like the natives. One can easily obtain all one's food from hunting alone.

So, if things can be arranged, I will go there and do what I say—live in freedom and practise art. I shrink from giving you any advice, but all my heart goes out to the man who is suffering, to the artist who cannot work at his art here in Europe. If after your exertions you fail to find satisfaction, and you are released from military service, come and seek me out. Without needing money, you will find an assured existence in a better world. I believe that by taking a little trouble the journey out could be made free of charge.

As they say, the prettiest girl in the world cannot give more than she has.

This applies to me. And if you are unhappy, I cannot give you any other consolation than this.

The half of my cloak. It is still the best kind of Christianity.

Yours ever,

P. GAUGUIN.

P S.—After Wednesday or Thursday next, I shall be at Poulou, where I shall await the upshot of this business and get ready for the journey.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

Undated, Paris, April, 1890.

My dear Bernard,

I really do not know how to answer you, as I thought I had said everything in my letter.

You are in a nervous condition and over-excited, like a wild boar surrounded by dogs. The life of an artist without means and lacking support is difficult, and especially affecting, and here in Europe you are only at the *commencement*. I may say that from every point of view I have had to bear ten times the burden, but this is not the question. There is nothing fresh to report. The prospective buyer told me last Sunday that he will clinch the matter when he has the money in a month, perhaps two. So keep cool and no nonsense before then—I shall require another month in which to pack my luggage and collect everything we shall require, so as not to be caught unawares. The voyage costs 700 francs.

It is now possible to get your passage paid by the Government, but I propose to pay my own fare. You have to write to the Ministry of Marine, stating that you want to be a colonist,<sup>1</sup> and are too poor to pay for the journey. I have an old college friend, who is captain of a packet steamer. I do not know whether he calls at Madagascar, but we should certainly be able to fix something up with him.

From another angle I have arranged for a friend to send a letter of recommendation to Bourgeois, the Minister of Fine Arts. to whom I will explain our position.

As you see, I am working on various lines, moving heaven and earth to achieve our aims. If you should happen to have 200 francs, more if possible, they will come in handy for your tropical outfit.

Have courage then, and refuse to be cast down, and all will go well. In your misfortunes it is a lucky thing for you to have

<sup>1</sup> Gauguin sought to draw Bernard into his new adventure, as he tried at the same time to persuade Schuffenecker to sell some land in order to accompany him and finance their journey. But the cautious Schuff had no illusions about the chances of success of this kind of expedition. On the other hand, de Haan, who was ill, could not think of going abroad, while Gauguin had had enough of Laval.





such support as mine, something that I never had when I was your age. What I did there I will never repeat having tried the experience with Laval. And I know what it cost me. Laval thinks he is uninjured into the bargain; a little more, and it would have been he who had made the sacrifice.

Anyhow, it is dead and buried. Now, if you look at the matter all round you will see that you will be trying a new life, which offers excellent chances at 22; whereas I am trying it at 42 with very little time before me to forget the past. And with family responsibilities!!!

Do not mention the above to Laval. I have no need of any gratitude, and dislike the wranglings caused by misunderstandings. To conclude, keep calm until you hear from me again.

(Unsigned)

104.

TO EMILE SCHUFFENECKER.

Undated, Pont-Aven, June, 1890.

My dear Schuff,

Many thanks for your colours, if I did not acknowledge them at once, it was because I was awaiting the 50 francs, and wanted to kill two birds with one stone.

I know, from Bernard's blabbing, that Van Gogh has written you. Tanguy told him that we are leaving for Madagascar immediately. Van Gogh wrote me a fairly encouraging letter, promising in effect to give me effective and regular help, while raising the price of my pictures at the same time.

If I go to Madagascar, it will facilitate matters, inasmuch as my needs will be practically nil. How I would like to see the Charlopin<sup>1</sup> transaction terminated, so that I could know how I stand! These 12 millions appear to me to smell bad, it is too much. I should have more confidence in 500,000 francs. Ask Roy then what he thinks, as more than a month has gone by since our interview, and the matter ought to be settled by now.

<sup>1</sup> Eventual buyer of a parcel of canvases for 5,000 Frs.

Your holidays are approaching and you will soon be able to invigorate yourself in outdoor work. And how is the garden?

Kind regards to everybody,

PAUL GAUGUIN.

Ask Bernard to get me a book about the language, there ought to be one in Paris.

105.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

Undated, Le Pouldu, June, 1890.

My dear Bernard,

I answer at once your somewhat anxious letter, which I quite understand. Perhaps I have explained myself badly, as you have not understood me.

1. I shall not leave until about the 15th August; you have therefore plenty of time to think about the matter beyond the 28th June. Besides I shall not leave unless this sale of pictures really comes off, but it is almost certain.

Thus I am not going out to look for a situation nor to offer you one.

What I want to do is to set up a studio in the *Tropics*. With the money I shall have I can buy a hut of the kind you saw at the Universal Exhibition. An affair of wood and clay, thatched, near the town but in the country. This would cost almost nothing. I should extend it by felling trees and make of it a dwelling to our liking, with cows, poultry and fruit, the chief articles of food, and eventually it ought to cost us nothing to live. Free . . .

As to the future, if I were single, I would just stay there and not bother myself any more. When I have worked for three or four years I shall see.

You must realize, my dear Bernard, that a hard life and an easy life are in inverse ratio to abundance of money and needs. So if the object is to make a fortune, one should not go where life is primitive and you can subsist upon the fruits of the earth gathered without toil—in Madagascar money is scarce; the people up country have none and live without it.

If you want to maintain a wife out there and earn money in business, I have nothing to say.

Do you think that I am incapable of love and that my 42 years are an obstacle to the impulses of youth?

I stick to what I say. I shall go and live there like a man retired from the so-called civilised world, who intends to mix only with so-called savages. And of my daily bread I will place half at your disposal.

A woman out there is, so to speak, obligatory, which will provide me with an everyday model. And I can assure you that a Madagascar woman has a heart just as much as a Frenchwoman, with far less calculation in it.

As for money, you will want very little, and nothing for the voyage. With very little effort you should be able to get a free passage—see the Minister of Marine. If not, once at Marseilles, there is a way of embarking without paying, viz. as a waiter (see the head waiter for this). I must admit it is a great trial to one's self esteem. But in this world we must make sacrifices to gain our ends.

Ponder on these things. I have now told you everything. When you write to your sister, say farewell for me.

P. GAUGUIN.

106.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

Le Pouldu, June, 1899.

My dear Bernard,

I thank you for your nice, friendly letter. Yes, I am vexed, which is why I did not answer you. All the things that lie close to the affections touch me more nearly than I can say, in spite of all my efforts to harden my heart. As to the cliques that rage in front of my pictures, this bothers me not at all, the more so as I know myself that they are imperfect, and rather an approximation towards something similar.

Sacrifices must be made in art, in one age after another—ambiant attempts, a floating idea without direct and definite expression. But ah! the moment when one touches the sky although it eludes one immediately; in compensation this *glimpsed* dream



is more potent than all material things. Yes, we are destined (we pioneer artists and thinkers) to succumb to the blows of the world, but to succumb so far as we are flesh. The stone will decay, the word will remain. We are in the dismal swamp, but we are not dead yet. As for me, they won't even have my skin. If I manage to get what I am now trying for, a snug berth in Tonkin, I can work at my painting and save money. The whole of the East—lofty thought written in letters of gold implicit in all their art—all this is well worth studying, and I feel that I shall be rejuvenated out there. The West is corrupt at the present time and whatever is herculean can, like Anteus, gain new strength in touching the soil of the East. And, one or two years later, we can return solvent.

At the moment I am gathering my strength, tired but not exhausted. There is very little light in the day time. I am relaxing by doing wood carving and still life studies. The ten days storm is still blowing, the sea is breaking on our beach, and in the absence of news from Paris, the outlook is melancholy at the moment.

I find the purchase of *Olympia*<sup>1</sup> very funny, now that the artist is dead. Will the Louvre take it? I hardly think so, but it is to be hoped they will.

Because the wind is howling and this would be an appeasement, it is better that the tide should come in at full flood. Then *Olympia* could be sold very dear like the Millets. At present the more follies there are, the clearer the signs of better times on the horizon, and you who are young will see this. As to writing an article on the subject I am hardly encouraged by the reception accorded to the one I wrote this year. Aurier has not replied to two letters, the dirty dog. The *Moderniste* has not come and I have not been able to read *le Maudit*.

I smiled at the thought of your sister in front of my pot. Between ourselves, in making it I had in mind the idea of testing the extent of her admiration for similar objects, I want later to give her one of my best things, although not very successful in the firing.

You have long known, and I have written it in the *Moderniste*, that I seek the character in every lump of matter. Now the

<sup>1</sup> Wishing to offer Manet's *Olympia* to the Louvre Museum, Claude Monet, in November, 1889, started a subscription. A lively discussion ensued. Finally, an official decree of acceptance by the State appeared in the *Journal Officiel* of 17th November, 1890.

character of grey pottery is the emotion of the furnace, and this figure calcined in this inferno, expresses, I think, the character pretty distinctly. Such an artist was glimpsed by Dante in his visit to the Inferno.

Poor devil driven in upon himself to endure suffering. However that may be, the prettiest girl in the world cannot give you more than she has.

Vincent has written me on very much the same lines as you. I have answered him accordingly.

Do me the favour of having a photograph taken of the pot, in a clear light, showing the reflections on the surface.

Yours, etc.,

P. GO.

Give all my regrets to Madeleine for the roughness of my pot.

107.

TO EMILE BERNARD. Undated, Le Pouldu, June, 1890.

My dear Bernard,

I am astonished at your news. Schuff wrote me two days before and nothing in his letter gave me a hint. Besides, when I left, father Charlopin told me that it was a matter of a month, and now six weeks have gone! Anyhow, we must hope for the best. However, the suspense is trying, above all, the uncertainty. Now let us talk as if the voyage were certain. I picked up some information about Madagascar lately from a naval officer who stayed there a long time. It comes to this, the coast is unhealthy, although yellow fever is unknown there. But life is healthy in the hill country. According to official returns, there were 15 deaths in Mayotte from 1877 to 1889, of which 8 were due to dysentery and 7 to fevers. Population is 10,000, of which 3,000 are Europeans, but look how trifling the mortality is. As for the women, they are as in Tahiti, sweet, etc. . . . besides, many come of a Polynesian race. In Madagascar meat costs almost nothing and game is most abundant. Life there is however dearer than one would think for a merchant who wants a certain degree of senseless luxury.

The same thing goes for Tahiti; there are also English and French. Loti saw things as a writer, and he had his own boat and plenty of money. Bread trees, wild bananas, etc. But all this is to be found in the tropical zone, coco-trees, etc. You need a certain time to get used to this sort of food. Ask Laval.

Despite this I recognize that Tahiti is certainly favoured and that you can live there in fact (almost without money) as we have dreamed. What a pity it is so far away, farther than China.

By warship via the Cape of Good Hope—the voyage would take three months—like the packets 40 to 45 days. Find out how much the voyage costs.

Whether Schuff has sold his land and wants to do me another good turn, we shall see. For myself I should like Tahiti, especially for de Haan,<sup>1</sup> whose health is not too good. And I should have more security out there.

Goodbye for the present, and don't be afraid to write.

P. GAUGUIN.

108.

TO EMILE BERNARD. Undated, Pont Aven, early July, 1890.

My dear Bernard,

Don't get upset; whatever doubts there are prompted by interest or jealousy, are not directed against you. And in my recriminations I meant to speak to Schuff, to whom I wrote a letter about it. I ought to have guessed that your letter crossed that. So do not get alarmed. As my habit is to do things quickly I wrote to you by way of reply and to confirm my intention. You must realize that with all the annoyances I have suffered at each exhibition, I feel I have the right and duty to take precautions. And my anticipations were partly founded on G's behaviour. You see for yourself how he vacillates (surely owing to my decision to be well to the fore). So exhibit all you feel inclined to send, and I am positive you will have acted for the best.

In all these matters I may seem to be running amuck because

<sup>1</sup> Gauguin tried to entice Meyer de Haan, who possessed a small income.

I do things in telegraphic style, taking the shortest cut, but in my own mind I know what I am doing. I should be the first to recognize anybody's talent, even if superior to mine; but wickedly to trip me up is quite another thing. I have all the old impressionists against me, and all this year I have been watching G. I am content with my own view.

So the incident is closed and no bones broken. Let us get on with our painting and fight on nobly.

You know that I take the keenest interest in your artistic progress and aspirations, and you have my best wishes for your success. I shout from the housetops "Watch little Bernard. He is going to be somebody."

Here at Pont Aven we have seen some changes. We no longer see Chamaillard, who is tied to his women's apron-strings and has been taught to distrust me.

Sérusier<sup>1</sup> has just arrived and talks of nothing but the progress he is making.

(End of letter missing.)

109.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

Le Pouldu, end July, 1890.

My dear Bernard,

Your letter reached me at the same time as I heard from Filiger<sup>2</sup> that you had organized a lottery. You ought to have sent us twenty tickets; Sérusier could have disposed of them among the Julian circle at Pont Aven. Unfortunately he is leaving to-morrow for Auverge, and I do not know enough people to offer them to. Filiger also tells me that you have someone who intends to launch

<sup>1</sup> Paul Sérusier (1863-1927), painter and theorist, whose meeting with Gauguin at Pont Aven in 1883 had a considerable influence on his artistic development. Started the Nabi movement, which attracted Bonnard, Vuillard, X.-K. Roussel, Ibels, Ranson, Piot and Maurice Denis. He taught at the Julian Academy and wrote for his pupils "The A.B.C. of Painting." In 1903 he settled at Chateauneuf-du-Faou, in Brittany.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Filiger, painter of Swiss origin, born at Colmar, died at Plougastel in 1930. He met Gauguin at the Colarossi Academy and followed him to Pouldu, where he became one of his most faithful disciples. He is best known for his water-colours of a mystical inspiration. He lived wretchedly all the time he was in Brittany.

you. Splendid!! In that event you may change your mind about Madagascar.

It is true that Tahiti is a paradise for Europeans. But the journey costs much more, as it is situated in Oceania.

Madagascar, however, offers more attractions by way of types, mysticism and symbolism. There you have Indians from Calcutta, tribes of black Arabs and the Hovas, a Polynesian type. Notwithstanding, make inquiries about the journey via Panama, etc. I am very much afraid that our business, which carries so long, will fall through. Schuff and Roy have gone off on holiday for two months, and when I am not on the spot, our business is at a standstill.

Thank Aurier for his good will. And has Schuffenecker sold his land?

I am no longer working. The suspense about Madagascar is telling on me. That is where the future of painting lies.

Yours,

P. GAUGUIN.

110.

TO EMILE BERNARD.

Le Pouldu, August, 1890.

My dear Bernard,

I am glad that you saw Charlopin and are seeing him again. These matters must be followed up until the deal is clinched. God grant it may be next month, as I am consumed with the sickness of hope deferred. If Charlopin would even like to buy a little from you it would be so much profit for the Company P. Go. & Co., but we must wait for one deal to be concluded before seeking another. Now another thing. You must make the most meticulous inquiries. Transports leave for the Antipodes every six months, but they take three to four months. I believe the Emigration Society employs the packets for the journey. In any case, it is essential for my calculations to know the dates of departure, the fare and length of the voyage.

De Haan, who is Dutch, can only leave by steam packet. Find out all these things while you are in Paris, and write me as soon as possible, so that I may know how long I have to stay in Brittany.

I don't know who has told you that I am in the habit of strolling on the beach with my disciples. The only disciples I know of are de Haan, who is working outdoors, and Filiger who is working in the house. I myself walk about like a savage, with long hair, and do nothing. I have not even brought colours or palette. I have but some arrows and amuse myself on the sands by shooting — just like Buffalo Bill. Behold your self-styled Jesus Christ. On the very day you have sure news about Charlopin write me immediately — not two words.

Yours, etc.,

P. GAUGUIN.

What has happened to Van Gogh, I hear nothing of him.

# 111.

TO EMILE BERNARD. Undated, Le Pouldu, August, 1890.

My dear Bernard,

I am just back from Pont Aven, where I have been for a few days with Filiger and de Haan. On reaching here I find a letter from Schuff and one from you. Poor Schuff has nothing very interesting to say (he is frightfully banal). He thinks I shall have to wait a long time for the Charlopin deal to be completed, and this utterly discourages me. I know nothing worse than to be kept in suspense; especially as I cannot work at the present time in view of the long voyage in front of me.

I have had the news of Vincent's death,<sup>1</sup> and am glad that you were present at his funeral.

Distressing as this death is, I cannot grieve overmuch, as I foresaw it, and knew how the poor fellow suffered in struggling with his madness. To die at this moment is a piece of good fortune for him, it marks the end of his sufferings; if he awakens in another life, he will reap the reward of his good conduct in this world

<sup>1</sup> On the 27th July, 1890. Vincent Van Gogh, who felt a fresh attack of madness coming on, aimed a pistol at his heart, but the bullet lodged in his groin. He died a few hours later, in spite of medical attention. A commemorative plaque has been affixed to the hotel at Auvers-sur-Oise where the painter died.



